

ON
HYACINTH
HILL

By MARY F.
LEONARD



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ON HYACINTH HILL

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"THEY SAT SIDE BY SIDE ON THE STONE BENCH."

ON HYACINTH HILL

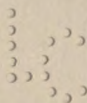
A STORY

BY

MARY F. LEONARD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

CHARLES COPELAND

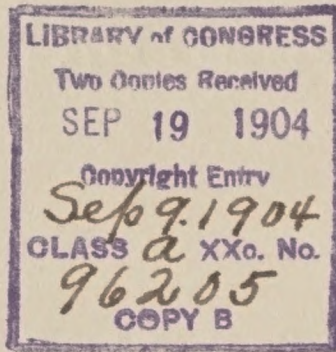


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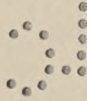
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ON HYACINTH HILL.



To My Mother

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On Hyacinth Hill



CHAPTER FIRST

A PAIR OF EXPLORERS

ELIZABETH sat on the stile, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands. Her brown hair, parted and rolled smoothly back, fell in a braid over each shoulder. Her cheeks were flushed with the walk uphill in the September sunshine, the eyes that rested upon her companion were blue and merry. There was something deliciously feminine about Elizabeth.

"Do you think you are going to like it, Billy?" she asked.

"It might be worse," William replied, surveying the country from the middle of the road. "It is a funny place, though."

He was fairer than his sister, and a year or two older, but the resemblance between them was strong.

"I think Miss Unadilla is a dear, and Cousin Charles isn't so bad, if he wouldn't look at you out of his eyes in such a queer way." Elizabeth leaned over and broke off a piece of golden-rod that grew in the fence corner.

"I suppose he has to look out of his eyes. I wonder where this path leads?" William peered over the stile into a meadow dotted here and there with apple trees and traversed diagonally by a narrow foot-path.

"It is much better than boarding school, for then we couldn't have been together.—I wonder where it does go? Let's try it." Elizabeth stood up, swinging her hat by its elastic. "I love paths; they remind me of the Gray Friar," she added.

"The idea of your calling him the Gray Friar to his face, yesterday!"

"But, Billy, I didn't mean to." Elizabeth laughed at the recollection. "I don't know his name, and really he didn't mind it. At first I thought he did, he looked so solemn; but after I explained about that day at the Springs, when, just as I was wishing we could meet some interesting person like a knight or a gray friar, he

came out from the trees in a gray suit, he said it was all right, and quite natural I should have given him the name. I do think it is funny he should have forgotten to tell us his real name, after all."

"It is queer we should have met him again so soon. Come on, Betsy; let's explore." William made a flying leap from the top of the stile.

Elizabeth followed more sedately. "You remember that day we rowed him across the river, he hoped our paths would cross again," she continued. "Don't you think that is rather a nice idea?—that we each have a path of our own, and every now and then it crosses some other path. I wish you had heard what he said yesterday. It was while you were talking to the conductor. I told him about our having to come here where we didn't know anybody, and he said every one had to travel on an unknown path at times, but that it was not so bad if you made up your mind to it; for even if it didn't seem very pleasant at first, you never knew what good thing was waiting for you around the next turn. That's true, isn't it, Billy? It makes it interesting and like a story to think that some-

thing lovely is perhaps going to happen very soon."

"Something disagreeable is quite as likely to happen," William retorted with pessimistic coldness.

Elizabeth frowned thoughtfully. "Yes, he said that, too. Travellers always have to put up with disagreeable things, but if they look for it they can usually find a little plant called happiness growing by the roadside."

"He seems to have talked a good deal," William remarked.

"Yes, he did. Do you think he could be a minister?"

"He does not look like one."

"I forgot to tell you," Elizabeth went on, "about our making wishes on the mullein stalks. It was when the train stopped at the water tank and we were walking up and down. Some mullein was growing beside the track and I showed him how to bend the stalk and make a wish. We both wished our paths might cross again."

"He must have thought you were a silly."

"No, he didn't. He knew it was fun, and he

promised to look out on his way back to Washington to see if the stalks had turned up."

"I should like to know who he is," said William.

"He is just the Gray Friar," laughed Elizabeth.

By this time the path had brought them to a gate beyond which was a stretch of woodland.

"Shall we go in? somebody must live here." Elizabeth looked doubtfully at her brother.

"It can't do any harm. If we see anybody, we can run," William answered.

Silence fell on them in the shadow of the trees. The path cleared of all undergrowth stretched straight ahead like the aisle of a church. On either side rose the slender tree trunks, their branches arching overhead, and through this leafy screen the light came with mysterious softness.

"Isn't it beautiful!" Elizabeth whispered. "It almost seems as if there were an organ somewhere playing softly."

A turn brought them unexpectedly to the edge of a well-kept lawn belonging to a time-stained, red brick house with white pillars and

green shutters. They drew back a little into the shadow. There were no signs of life about the place, the shutters on the side facing them were fast closed.

"Let's go round to the front," William said softly.

Here they found the same quiet—every door and window closed and silent. Around the pillars, rose vines clung, and the afternoon sunshine sifting through them made lace work on the stone flagging of the porch. The sweep of lawn was softly green and unbroken except by a sun-dial with a stone seat beside it.

The house stood well within sight of the road, which a quarter of a mile or so beyond the stile made a turn to the left. On the other side of the lawn a carriage drive led down to it.

"I wonder if they are away, or if—?" Elizabeth left her sentence unfinished.

"If what?" her brother asked.

"If they are dead," she added in an awe-struck tone.

They crossed the lawn to the sun-dial and examined it curiously. William read aloud the

motto carved upon it, "*Gather ye rosebuds as ye may.*"

Elizabeth took her seat on the stone bench and looked at the old house. All was still and peaceful, the air was sweet with the scent of hay fields and musical with bird notes, a squirrel frisked across the grass and was lost among the trees.

"Billy, doesn't it make you think of the Sleeping Beauty?" she asked.

"Only there the hedge had grown for a hundred years, so you couldn't see the palace. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, but everything is asleep," Elizabeth said.

They sat side by side on the stone bench, so quietly it seemed as if the gentle spell of the past had fallen on them too.

William traced hieroglyphics on the grass with the stick he carried; Elizabeth, her hands clasped in her lap, gazed dreamily into the distance, thinking of all that had happened of late.

How far away they seemed to be from the old familiar home life. She and Billy had

really gone out into the unknown, as her friend, the Gray Friar, expressed it. Would they ever see him again, she wondered. To happen upon him in the station at Washington yesterday had been like meeting an old friend, and he had spoken as if he might some day come to Friendship.

With a start she awoke. Sunny hours were over for the day, the shadows were growing mysterious and fearful.

"Oh, Billy, let's run!" Elizabeth sprang up full of unreasoning alarm.

Her feeling was contagious. Across the lawn they flew, through the dimness of the wood, and over the meadow till the stile was reached, where they stopped for breath.

"I suppose you know what you are running for—I don't," William remarked.

"What are you running for yourself?" Elizabeth demanded.

"For nothing; you started it."

"You are as bad as Adam, Billy. He blamed everything on Eve, and you blame everything on me. I don't think Adam was very brave."

“Even so, I’d rather have been Adam,” said William.

“I’d rather be anything almost—than make such a pun, if that is what you meant it for,” cried Elizabeth.

They walked slowly down the road, feeling somewhat ashamed of their panic.

“I think I shall like Friendship,” Elizabeth said, as they approached a covered bridge that crossed a willow-bordered stream by an old gray mill. “Friendly Creek,” she repeated, stopping to look down into the flowing water. “It is a pretty name, isn’t it, Billy?”

CHAPTER SECOND

MISS UNADILLA

DR. MILWARD'S house, severely square and painted an unpretentious drab, stood on high ground in the midst of fine shade trees, at the point where the village street merged into a turnpike road. It overlooked the creek and the old mill from a comfortable distance, and its position combined in more ways than one the advantages of town and country.

Miss Unadilla stood at the door watching while the white-haired, keen-eyed minister walked slowly down the path, and pausing at the gate looked up and down the road.

Dr. Milward was one of the landmarks of Friendship, which had been his home for more than thirty years, except for a brief interval spent abroad in seeking health for his wife. Upon her death he had returned to the village, built the house on the Mill Road, and settled

down to a lonely student life; but after a few years he had been prevailed upon to take charge once more of the small Episcopal church. He did not go back to the rectory, however, which hardly furnished accommodation for his books. For this and other reasons he preferred his own house.

The small parish in Friendship seemed absurdly limited for a man of his attainments, but he had resisted all the efforts made to induce him to accept a city church, and had gone on living his quiet life, greatly loved and looked up to by the whole village.

But Friendship's belief in his sound judgment had received a blow of late when it became known that he proposed to take the children of his relative, Senator Sayre, into his family for the winter. Miss Unadilla herself was a little surprised at it, though she found no fault with the arrangement. Standing there in the door she smiled to think how strangely things worked out.

She had looked forward to the winter with some dread, for Thomas McLean, her nephew, and her chief care for twenty-five years, had suddenly at forty taken it into his head to marry.

Miss Una accepted it sensibly. Mainie Townsend was hardly Thomas's social equal, and she shivered when she thought of the invasion of commonplace wedding gifts among the McLean heirlooms; still it was Thomas's house, and Mainie was his choice.

One thing she determined upon. She would go to Martha Doane's to board, leaving the young people to themselves. She could take her grandmother's beaded chair and her few bits of silver over to Martha's and be quite comfortable and happy, running in now and then for Sunday dinner with Thomas and Mainie.

She went all over the matter with Dr. Milward when he called, and he listened gravely, his gaze on the carpet. He was her first cousin, and they had known each other from childhood. When she paused he said, looking at her with a twinkle in his eye: "It sounds very well, Unadilla, and I dislike to interfere with Martha's business; but it strikes me there will be more room for you and your grandmother's chair out on the Mill Road, and I'll certainly be more comfortable if you will come. I haven't been well taken care of since old Miranda died."

Miss Unadilla was glad she had not spoken to Martha.

To-day she stood there watching, till the minister with deliberation unlatched the gate, latched it again, took a leisurely survey of the sky, then walked toward town. So soon as his back was fairly turned she hurried into the study, where she moved about picking up papers, putting books in orderly piles, giving caressing touches here and there with her dust cloth.

Like most students Cousin Charles did not care to have his table interfered with, and it was to Miss Una's credit that he never suspected those stealthy visits to his sanctum made daily with dust-pan and broom.

Miss Unadilla liked the room. The dignity of its book-lined walls reflected itself in her consciousness. She felt wise through association with so much wisdom. She hoped to do a good deal of reading this winter and had ventured to ask the minister for suggestions.

"Read?" said Dr. Milward, "why, read what you like. It is the only rule I know that amounts to anything."

Miss Unadilla heard him doubtfully. This

sounded like heresy to one whose sense of duty had carried her triumphantly through Macaulay's "History of England" and Motley's "Dutch Republic."

"He thinks I am too old to improve," she said to herself, yet Mrs. Marvin, over eighty, was a member of the Chautauqua Circle.

"Dear me, here's Martha Doane! She has come to find out about the children." Hastily stowing her duster in the hall closet, Miss Unadilla went to the door to meet her visitor.

"Why, Martha, I didn't know you had come home," she said. "Won't you sit on the porch? It is pleasant outside."

"I got back yesterday, and I am on my way now to get Cinthy to come and help clean up. Passing, I thought I'd drop in a minute."

"I am glad you did," Miss Una replied cordially, disappearing for a brief interval to return carrying a tray with a plate of sugar cakes and a glass of dandelion wine.

"Well," said Miss Martha, accepting the refreshment with evident relish, "you were born lucky, Unadilla. When I heard Thomas was going to get married, I thought your hard times

had begun, and here you are fixed as snug as ever."

"I am fortunate," Miss Unadilla assented, seating herself in one of the broad-armed rocking chairs opposite her guest.

The two women presented an interesting contrast. Miss Una had all the gentle refinement the word "lady" ought to imply, and she carried her fifty-eight years with something of girlish grace. No one ever accused her of trying to be young, and those who knew her well never thought of her as old.

Miss Martha's face, by no means ill-featured, had lines of hardness. There was antagonism in her manner of speech, her way of sitting in her chair, of pulling off her gloves. She had had a hard life, with much work and little play, but it was true that her attitude seemed to invite misfortune. At present Miss Martha was taking boarders—not a lucrative occupation in Friendship.

"I am sure it would have been little enough for Thomas to do to give you a home with him." Miss Martha held up her glass and eyed the golden liquid sternly.

"I have nothing to complain of," Miss Unadilla replied with dignity, a faint pink showing in her cheeks. "It was right for Thomas to marry if he wished to, and he and Mainie have been very kind in asking me to stay with them."

"After you had made other plans, I dare say."

"They were quite sincere, I think, but of course I realized it was best for them to be alone."

"I don't care much for words myself, they are cheap," Miss Martha declared.

"They can be very dear, too. I rather think we all have among our treasures some mere words that mean everything to us." Miss Una looked away toward Friendly Creek and the gray mill. Her face was full of sweetness.

"I am not sentimental," Miss Martha announced, draining her glass. "I know, if you don't, that there is mighty little gratitude in the world. Here you have given the best of your life to making Thomas comfortable —"

"And I have been happy in doing it. When we are kind to people we have the pleasure of it

then and there. If they forget or are unappreciative, it is their loss; they can't take away the good from us."

"Dr. Milward might get you to write his sermons for him," remarked Miss Martha, bluntly.

Miss Unadilla laughed. Her sensitiveness was balanced by her sense of humor. She could bear to see herself in an amusing light. "I have a way of entering the pulpit, I know," she said; "but I fear Cousin Charles does not realize his opportunities. Tell me about your visit, Martha."

It was plain that Miss Martha had not come to impart information, but rather to gain it. Her six weeks' absence in a neighboring town was disposed of in a few words, her sharp eyes roved about the place meanwhile as if they expected something they did not find. All was as quiet as usual about the minister's house this afternoon.

"Well, where are the children?" she asked at length, with her usual abruptness.

"I don't know," Miss Unadilla answered serenely.

"Didn't they come?"

"Yes, they came yesterday."

"Well, of all things! I could hardly believe my ears when I heard Dr. Milward was going to take two children into his family. How did he come to think of it?"

"William and Elizabeth are the children of his cousin, William Sayre. Their older sister, who is just grown, is in delicate health, and her mother has taken her abroad. This left nobody to care for the younger ones, as their father has to be in Washington."

"Why doesn't he send them to school?"

"There were reasons against that," Miss Una explained. "William injured one of his eyes severely last spring and is not allowed to use it for a year; this, of course, necessitates special care for him, and Elizabeth does not wish to be separated from her brother."

"Mr. Sayre is anxious that they should have a simple home life, and he wrote to Cousin Charles for advice, thinking he might be able to recommend some one in Friendship who would take them. We could not think of anybody and, after talking it over, decided we would try it for the winter."

"I don't envy you," Miss Martha remarked.

"I am fond of children. I only hope they won't be homesick," said Miss Una.

"I'd like to know where they are."

Miss Unadilla smiled. "I am not hiding them. They went for a walk. They will be home before long."

Miss Martha rose reluctantly. "Well, I must be going. I hope you'll get on with them," she said. "It is not so easy—managing other people's children."

After her visitor had gone, Miss Una sat on the porch until down the road by the mill two figures appeared.

"I hope they are going to like me," she said to herself.

She was just a little afraid of them. In some respects they were so sophisticated. "Where have you been, my dears?" she asked, as the boy and girl came soberly up the walk.

"We went along the road by the mill and over the bridge till we came to a stile," answered Elizabeth, sitting on the edge of the porch. "And we crossed the stile and followed a path until we came to a house, asleep."

Miss Unadilla nodded. "Hyacinth Hill," she said.

"What a pretty name, isn't it, Billy? Are they dead or gone away?"

"Madam Gilderoy, who owned the place, died a year ago, and since then the house has been closed, although for that matter it was not often open during her life. She spent only a month or two out of the year there."

"Isn't there a story about it?" Elizabeth asked.

"I don't know any. Hyacinth Hill is part of what was once a large manor. The original manor house was burned a great many years ago. The one you saw to-day was at that time the gardener's cottage. Except a few acres around the house, most of the land has been sold. Madam Gilderoy was a peculiar woman and left a strange will, but I don't think it is much of a story."

"Won't you tell us about it, anyway?" William asked.

"Cousin Charles is coming, I must see about dinner," Miss Una said, rising.

CHAPTER THIRD

ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH sat on the grass, her arms clasping her knees, and gazed up into the branches of the liriodendron. Billy called it a tulip tree, but Cousin Charles said liriodendron was its real name. She repeated the liquid syllables softly.

From the kitchen came the cheerful clatter of Miss Unadilla's egg-beater, almost the only sound to be heard except the drowsy, distant hum of the mill and the rumble of an occasional wagon across the covered bridge. Billy was busy in the study with Cousin Charles. Now and then their voices floated out to her from the open window.

Judging from two days' experience, life in this old town of Friendship would be something quite different from anything she had

known. The village, with its winding streets, many of them mere grassy lanes, seemed a pleasant place. It wore a comfortable, home-like air, with its roomy houses and blooming gardens, but thus far in their explorations they had come upon nothing so interesting as Hyacinth Hill. Elizabeth longed to go back to it once more. In the light of midday her alarm seemed supremely absurd.

As for the people, so far they knew only Miss Unadilla and the minister. Miss Una was certainly kind, and this morning she presented an agreeable picture in her large white apron and a dusting-cap made of a blue-bordered handkerchief, while she superintended the work of Pearl, the rather stupid housemaid.

In Friendship, servants were hard to get, and harder to keep, she explained to Elizabeth; and with an inefficient maid and an infirm cook a good deal devolved upon the mistress.

Never before had Elizabeth given such matters a thought. Though not exactly a helpless child, she had been accustomed in her own home to depend on some one else to keep her things in order,—to put away her clothes, and wait

upon her in various ways. To-day she had had her first lesson in housework.

"Your father told me he wished you to have some domestic training," Miss Una said when breakfast was over, "so I am going to let you keep your room in order except on thorough cleaning day."

Elizabeth followed Miss Una upstairs with doubtful enthusiasm. It looked so pleasant on the porch. This bedroom, with its white matting and muslin curtains and plain, heavy furniture, was most unlike her own blue and white chamber at home, all frills and photographs, as Billy said. She did not yet feel at home in it. She had left it in a whirlwind of disorder, having overslept herself, and the situation looked discouraging.

Miss Unadilla did not seem appalled, however, and her tone was cheerful as she showed Elizabeth how to take the covers off the bed and make it up again, and then waited while she hung up her clothes in the closet, folded away yesterday's ribbons in a box, and brought something like order out of the confusion of articles on her dressing table. It took a good while,

and when it was done she felt a little tired, but she viewed the result of her labors with some pride. Miss Una mildly suggested that if, after this, she would put things away as she was done with them, it would save trouble.

"I suppose the next thing will be cooking," Elizabeth thought, settling herself comfortably with her back against the tree. "I shall not mind that if she will let me make good things."

At any rate it was better than boarding school, or being left with Aunt Myrah, for either of these would have meant separation from Billy, and if it had not been for the injury to his eye one of these two things would have happened.

The fear of being separated from her brother had hung over her for weeks after the decision that Juliet must be taken abroad had raised the question, "What shall we do with the children?" But since the day when Billy had first marched proudly away to a boys' school, accident had more than once restored him to Elizabeth for a time.

In those days she had been long in understanding why Billy should want to go off after

lunch to play with Tommy Wilson, when she could do anything Tommy could, and she bitterly resented the reminder that she was a little girl with a stately name to live up to. She preferred to be called Betsy.

Once Billy had come home with a swollen hand, about which he had little to say. Later it was discovered that the hand was broken, and then that the injury had been received while punishing Tommy for teasing a smaller boy.

And now Elizabeth began to understand the difference between a girl and a boy. She could never have ignored a broken hand, or have refrained from telling how it happened. Her brother was a hero. She glowed with pride and overwhelmed him with attentions.

On this and similar occasions she learned that, when pain and anguish wring the masculine brow, a ministering angel is very acceptable, although in hours of ease the same angel is more than likely to be subjected to severe criticism.

It was not to be denied that Billy had a terrible way of exposing her weaknesses, but it may have been she needed just such a ballast

to keep her from soaring too high above the earth in clouds of sentiment.

Elizabeth's ardent soul must have some one to worship, and the objects of her adoration had been many. There was a beautiful young lady who for a time sat across the aisle in church, the sight of whose profile beneath a picture hat had soothed Betsy's restlessness and made the sermon almost a pleasure.

"Pooh! it is just because she likes to look at Miss Winston," Billy had explained when Mrs. Sayre commended her daughter for trying to keep still.

A season of infatuation for her teacher in mathematics had followed, when she went so far as to treasure up the stubs of pencils discarded by this divinity, enshrining them in her jewel-box. The discovery of this, and the scorn and laughter it brought upon her, had hurt deeply; for consolation Elizabeth had turned to story books.

Why did she tell Billy things when she knew she must suffer for it? she often wondered. He had his softer moments when he, too, made confidences, but she never had the heart to use his against him.

For all his teasing, they were very good friends,

particularly now in these new and strange surroundings.

The gray Persian cat, Cyrus by name, came across the grass, waving his plummy tail. A white spot on his nose gave him a peculiarly knowing expression, and he stepped daintily as one conscious of his importance.

Elizabeth received him with open arms. "You make me think of the Gray Friar," she said, smoothing his long fur. "Perhaps he would not be complimented, but he ought to be if he knew how beautiful you are. I wonder who he is, and if I shall ever see him again."

"Elizabeth, wouldn't you like a sponge cake?" Miss Unadilla called from the porch.

Elizabeth and Cyrus lost no time in joining her. "I wondered what you were making," Elizabeth said, taking a golden, crusty bite.

"Next time you may help if you like."

"I'd just love to. And now, Miss Una, won't you tell me about Hyacinth Hill? How it got its name, and the will, and everything."

"There isn't much to tell," Miss Una said, taking up her work-basket, for she liked to sew as she talked.

Elizabeth sat on her foot in one of the rocking chairs, in a comfortable manner not tolerated in Miss Una's youth.

"The place originally belonged to the Hyacinth family," the lady began; "but many years ago, back at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a Louise Hyacinth married a Gilderoy, and being an only child she brought the estate into the Gilderoy family. She was, I think, the great-grandmother of the present owner of Hyacinth Hill."

"I thought you said she was dead," Elizabeth interposed.

"Madam Gilderoy is dead, but at her death the place went to her niece," Miss Una explained. "She was an eccentric old lady, — Madam Gilderoy, I mean, — and so imposing in appearance you might have supposed she had the blood of a hundred earls in her veins, as the saying goes, when, in fact, she prided herself on her humble origin. Her father, she used to say, was just a plain carpenter. I always thought she did it to be contrary, for her husband's people made a great deal of family.

"When Mr. Louis Gilderoy died he left a very large estate which his will divided equally between

his wife and brother. This was Madam Gilderoy's own wish, for it left her free to do as she liked with her share. When the brother, John Gilderoy, died, many years later, his fortune was inherited by his son and daughter. It was supposed to be securely invested ; but two years ago, through the failure of a trust company and some rascality on the part of a man in whom Mr. Gilderoy had placed the utmost confidence, it was swept away.

“Madam Gilderoy had always seemed fond of this niece and nephew, and it was supposed she would leave them something in her will, under the circumstances, but instead of this all of her large estate, except Hyacinth Hill and a few thousands, went to a man no one had ever heard of, though he proved to be a cousin, I believe. Hyacinth Hill was left to her niece and its equivalent in money to Louis, her nephew.

“There was some talk of breaking the will, and there are persons who believe a later will may yet be found, and that is all. You see it is not much of a story, my dear.” Miss Una looked up from her embroidery to smile at Elizabeth.

“I think it is very interesting, but I want to

know about the niece who owns Hyacinth Hill now. Is she grown up? and what is her name?"

"Yes, she has been grown for some years. Her name is Louise Hyacinth Gilderoy, and as a child she used to spend weeks at a time with her aunt on the hill. In those days she was called Hyacinth, and a bright, sweet little girl she was. Since then I hear she has been greatly admired and courted in society; but I haven't seen her for a long time."

"I should think she would want to live in that pretty old place," said Elizabeth.

CHAPTER FOURTH

AT THE SEWING SOCIETY

THE first meeting of the Presbyterian Sewing Society after the summer vacation was held at Mrs. Parton's, for the reason that the repairs on the chapel were not yet finished.

Miss Martha Doane arrived early. "Of course I'm the first," she said. "I'd be rich if I could have a dollar for every minute I've wasted waiting on other people. As my father used to say, I was born punctilious."

Mrs. Parton smiled gleefully behind a bolt of unbleached cotton. "You and I will have time to do some cutting out before the others come," she said, depositing her burden on the table.

The business in hand was the usual Christmas box for a distant mission, and Miss Martha's brisk shears had a number of garments ready by the time the president arrived and called the meeting to order.

Miss Reed, the secretary, read a letter from the missionary giving a list of articles that would be particularly acceptable in her poverty-stricken field.

"Dolls and picture cards, when those people want for the necessities of life!" Mrs. Molesworth exclaimed.

"Some people have mighty little common sense," added Miss Martha.

Several voices murmured assent to this.

"But dolls are so cheap—" the secretary began.

"And, ladies," spoke up Mrs. Parton, "remember this is a Christmas box. Who wants to be limited to the necessities of life at Christmas? Surely, we must give the children a good time."

Mrs. Molesworth shook her head. "I don't think it is right when so many people need bread to waste money on dolls."

"If you press that, we have none of us any right to more than we absolutely need, so long as anybody is hungry," Mrs. Parton urged.

The consciousness of her new seal coat had something to do with Mrs. Molesworth's silence.

"Yes," said Mrs. Lawrence, "it would seem better to deny ourselves something rather than spoil the pleasure of those poor little children." She was waiting to have some work rolled up for her. She never stayed to the sewing meetings.

Mrs. Lawrence had once undertaken to reform the Sewing Society after a winter spent with her sister in a Northern city. She had returned full of new ideas, one of which was to limit all conversation at the meetings to the discussion of missionary topics, or some literary subject, if the ladies preferred, a fine to be imposed for each transgression.

The attempt was a distinct failure. The attendance fell off, and among those who still came there were some who openly broke the rule and ignored the fine.

The consciousness of high ideals sustained Mrs. Lawrence in the hour of defeat, but she felt she could not countenance the return to idle talk over the gingham aprons and unbleached undergarments, so she carried her work home thereafter. She had it in mind to-day to ask the interest of the society in a certain course

of lectures which she felt would greatly benefit Friendship, but reluctantly decided to wait for a more opportune time.

"Well," said Mrs. Parton, looking up with a twinkle in her eye as Mrs. Lawrence rustled away, "what's the news?"

"I don't know as there is any," replied Miss Martha. "Have you seen the children up at Dr. Milward's?"

"I rather think everybody has seen them. They have been all over the town," remarked Mrs. Pierce, the minister's wife.

"If I am not mistaken, Unadilla has her hands fuller than they have been for a long time. They certainly haven't any extra manners, for one thing," Miss Martha said.

"I am surprised to hear you say so. Belle and I were up there the other night, and I thought them extremely well behaved, and the girl is as pretty as a picture," said Mrs. Parton.

"I am surprised at Dr. Milward for being willing to assume such a responsibility at his age. What does he know about raising children?" Mrs. Molesworth asked the question severely.

"Speaking of angels, there he is now, talking to Dr. Pierce. I believe he is coming in." Mrs. Parton went to the door to meet the minister, and was overheard saying: "Come in, Dr. Milward. It is just the Sewing Society. A little Presbyterianism won't hurt you."

Dr. Milward was a favorite in Friendship, and had as many friends outside his flock as within it. After delivering a message from Miss Una, he entered the sitting room and shook hands around the circle.

"We were talking about you, Doctor," Mrs. Parton said, "wondering how you dared to try the experiment of taking two children into your family."

Dr. Milward smiled. "The fact is," he replied, with an air of being confidential, "I felt I needed a shaking up. I was getting into a rut."

Mrs. Pierce remarked that she found ruts rather comfortable.

"Undoubtedly, but dangerous. Too many habits — even good ones — are to be deplored."

"I am sorry to hear you say so, Dr. Milward," cried Mrs. Molesworth. "It has been

the aim of my life to have my children form good habits."

"There are persons," the minister continued, apparently not noticing the interruption, "who are so attached to their own beds, for instance, they could hardly be happy in the Kingdom of Heaven without them."

"I thought there wouldn't be any night there," Mrs. Molesworth observed in an undertone to Mrs. Pierce.

"Having my own way was becoming *habitary*, as the Whittredges' old Martin used to say," Dr. Milward added.

"For my part I don't have such an easy time I have to stir round trying to make it harder," Miss Martha remarked.

"Still we all get into ruts. I often tell the colonel we'd be a dreadful pair of old fogies if it were not for Belle and the boys," Mrs. Parton put in gayly.

It was after the minister, with his easy, dignified manner and handsome white head, had withdrawn that Mrs. Pierce remarked she had been told that Miss Gilderoy was coming to live at Hyacinth Hill. She wished to know if

she would be an acquisition to Friendship society.

Mrs. Pierce had not lived long in Friendship.

"Of course she will be, if she comes. I have heard nothing of it," Mrs. Parton replied.

"It was dreadful, her losing all her money the way she did. Still she had lived on Easy Street a long time." Miss Martha bit off the end of her thread emphatically.

"I suppose you heard about her brother's getting so badly hurt in some college game last spring. They say he may never walk again," said Miss Reed.

"Is that so? Well, it always rains when it pours," Miss Martha said, folding up her work.

CHAPTER FIFTH

STRANGERS

THE stage or hack, as it was generally called in Friendship, moved briskly up the street with one passenger. From windows and porches this was noted, also that the passenger was a lady, and a stranger.

Was she a visitor? This seemed unlikely, for Friendship always met its guests at the station. Perhaps she belonged to the new people who owned the shirt factory, and recently had built a showy house out near Red Hill.

Interested eyes followed the stage until it turned into Mill Street. This settled one question. She did not belong to the new people. Miss Martha Doane brought her beans to the front window with the intention of hailing Luke Ramsey on his return, and thus satisfying her curiosity.

Indifferent to the interest it was exciting, the stage swung on its way past Dr. Milward's, where the street became a country road and brought to view the gray mill, and the willow-bordered stream with its wagon bridge.

On the other side of the bridge the passenger paid her fare and dismissed the stage, saying she would walk the rest of the way.

Luke Ramsey regarded the young lady with honest admiration, as he slowly extracted from his trousers pocket the change for the quarter she offered him. "A pretty day for walkin'. Air you goin' fur?" he asked.

"No," was the unsatisfactory reply, and dropping the fifteen cents into a small silver purse, his passenger proceeded on foot up the sunny road which ascended gradually between hedge-bordered fields.

Luke made a wide and leisurely turn, keeping his eyes on the lady meanwhile. "She kin walk all right," he commented. "Can't be goin' to stay long, she didn't have no baggage."

The September day was cool and clear, the air was full of the wine of life. Luke's passenger stood still for a moment breathing deeply, then

moved on again with the light step and erect bearing which had excited his admiration.

"How pleasant and peaceful, and how little changed," she said to herself.

"I begin to feel like a child again. This is the very hill we used to run down, and let me see—somewhere there used to be a stile and a short cut to the house." She paused and her eyes travelled along the hedge, somewhat rusty now after the summer heat.

"Yes, there it is, and the oak tree." She crossed the stile, but instead of following the path she made a tour of investigation among the apple trees, returning presently with her trophies.

"By good rights I should feel weighed down by responsibility," she said, seating herself on the stile and placing three apples in a row before her. "But I am not, for I own an apple tree, and the apples look good. I feel in a holiday humor. I am again the little girl who used to play in this meadow years ago, undisturbed by the cares of this world or the deceitfulness of riches."

Pulling off her gloves she put her hands up

to her face, contemplating her apples. "I will begin with this, it is the biggest," she remarked aloud.

In the act of carrying out the determination she was arrested by a voice at her elbow. She turned quickly to face a man standing on the other side of the stile, who, as he lifted his hat, held out to her a small, silver-linked purse.

"Pardon me," he repeated, "but I think this is yours."

A foolish trifle it looked in the hand of so dignified a personage.

The apple gatherer acknowledged its ownership, uncomfortably conscious of the childish speech that must have been heard. Had he dropped from the skies, this stranger? He was a tall, well-made man, with a somewhat grave face, and hair just tinged with gray.

"Thank you; it would have inconvenienced me greatly to lose it," she said.

"I am fortunate to have come upon it before a wagon crushed it," he replied.

Perhaps something of the sauciness of the child who once played in the meadow, was stirred in the breast of her successor by the

gravity of this stranger. It inspired her to say as he turned away, "Won't you have an apple?"

The man betrayed some embarrassment, amusing as it was unexpected in a person of his bearing.

"I have come by them honestly. The owner permits me to gather all I want," her lips were grave, but the eyes that met his were merry.

Recovering himself the stranger smiled, thereby improving his countenance. "Need I say I had no such doubts? I only feared to rob you."

"There are more where these came from, and you may regard it as a reward."

"For my honesty?" He took an apple. "But you haven't examined the purse."

The lady calmly opened the purse and emptied its contents on the stile. A railroad ticket, two bank notes folded very small, some silver, and Luke Ramsey's three five-cent pieces. "I do not miss anything," she said. "The apple is yours."

The stranger leaned against the stile, the apple in his hand. "Can you tell me," he



"'THERE ARE MORE WHERE THESE CAME FROM.'"

asked, "if the place called Hyacinth Hill is in this neighborhood? It is many years since I was last in Friendship."

"I, also, am a stranger, but unless my memory fails me this path across the field leads to the house."

"May I ask if you know whether there is any probability of its being offered for sale?"

"None whatever. I mean," the lady corrected herself, "that I have heard nothing of any such intention on the part of the owner. Perhaps you know it is part of an old estate, and family pride, I fancy, will keep its present owner from parting with it."

"Possessions sometimes have to be parted with in spite of treasured associations."

A sound of wheels broke in upon the country stillness.

"True," the lady said, rising as if to end the interview, and there was a touch of haughtiness in her manner.

With grave courtesy the stranger lifted his hat and walked down the road toward Friendship, his eyes bent upon the ground.

A moment later a phaeton drawn by a bay

horse several sizes too large for it, came zigzag down the hill and stopped with a jerk opposite the stile. A lady of ample proportions and pleasant countenance looked out.

"Can that be Hyacinth?" she asked.

"It used to be," the occupant of the stile replied, descending to the road. "This is Mrs. Parton, isn't it?"

"Used to be?" the lady echoed, holding out a cordial hand.

"It is years since I have been called Hyacinth," Miss Gilderoy explained. "The name has been put away with other childish things."

"Who is that man?" Mrs. Parton nodded in the direction of the departing stranger.

"I don't know. He picked up my purse in the road, and I gave him an apple; that is the extent of our acquaintance. Tell me, Mrs. Parton, how is Friendship? Do you know I am thinking of coming here to live?"

"There is a rumor to that effect floating about, but I did not believe it. It is too good to be true. Friendship is in need of a sensation. We haven't had one since the quarrel over the Gilpin will. We used to sing:—

“ ‘Behold ! how pleasant ’tis to see
Brethren dwell in unity —’

and glare at one another over our hymn-books ;
but now we are too amiable to be interesting.”

Hyacinth smiled. “You must be hungry for a sensation if you can make one out of my coming,” she said.

“My dear, you don’t know how we have thought of you — as royalty enthroned above us. We were proud to mention the fact that we had known you in your childhood.”

“Mrs. Parton, how absurd ! Well, Humpty Dumpty has had a great fall.”

“It is too bad, Hyacinth ; the colonel says you ought to have contested that will.”

Miss Gilderoy shook her head. This was a matter she did not care to discuss. “Except for my brother, I do not mind so much,” she said. A shadow fell over her face, however. “I have this place, you know, and I am coming here to think and plan, and get Louis well if I can.”

“You will have every opportunity for quiet thought,” Mrs. Parton laughed cheerily, flapping her reins as a signal to the horse to move on. “If there is anything the colonel or I can do for you,

from law to batter pudding, let us know. We have our faults, but we are friendly here in Friendship. Good-bye. Having seen and talked with Miss Gilderoy, my importance is assured. I go to spread the news."

Miss Gilderoy took her way across the meadow, wondering if any anxieties lay hid beneath Mrs. Parton's liveliness. This thought often occurred to her since she had learned to hide her own worries beneath a smiling face. She was no longer the child Hyacinth, but Miss Gilderoy, who was now passing beyond the realm of the society reporter once so eager to chronicle all her movements, about to bury herself alive, so certain of her friends declared.

"If so, I shall at least be buried beneath the trees and sky, and that is better than being forgotten in the crowded city," she had said.

She had been told she was headstrong and unpractical, that the only sensible thing would be to sell Hyacinth Hill; and for a time she had been half persuaded, until, after a summer spent in a sanitarium with her brother, it had suddenly presented itself to her thought as a home. What a luxury a home would be! From this moment the

determination to make the experiment of living there had taken form and grown.

Since her childhood she had been in the habit of thinking for herself, her natural self-reliance had been fostered by circumstance, but she had never before felt the weight of responsibility so heavy upon her. To do the best thing for her brother was her paramount wish, yet it was such a question what would be best.

The peace of the wood path fell upon her. In its soft, mysterious light she put aside her problems again and breathed happily. On the edge of the lawn she paused,—the house stood open to the air and sun this morning, for she had sent word to the old negro servants who lived in a cabin on the place and acted as caretakers, that she would be there,—but no one was to be seen.

She crossed to the stone seat by the sun-dial, and resting there looked around her. A simple old country house, yet better than she had imagined. Surely, in such surroundings, Louis would improve. She had been right to come, right to say it was not for sale. She felt the calm that comes with a sense of the past. Here had lived

and loved and worked and suffered men and women whose blood was in her veins, and something told her it had been worth while.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Uncle Ben, who came hurrying around the house, while his wife appeared on the doorstep.

"Howdy, Miss Hyacinth, howdy! We all's mighty glad to see you. You's growed to be a young lady sence you was here las' — you shorely has."

"Yes, Uncle Ben, I was thinking as I crossed the meadow how I used to play there, and what a naughty girl I sometimes was."

"Law, honey, you was jes' mischeevous," said Aunt Hilda, coming to meet her. "I was watch-in' fur you on de front poach."

"I couldn't resist walking up the hill this lovely day," Hyacinth explained, as she entered the house, followed by the old couple, who were delighted to have some one to talk to, and were full of reminiscences of Ole Miss, as they called Madam Gilderoy.

The place had been kept in good repair, and such conveniences added as were possible without lessening its antique appearance. Inside it had

an air of dignified comfort. There was much good old furniture, and some valuable china, too, behind the glass doors of the dining-room cupboard, but each article seemed to have been purchased for use and not because it was Chipendale or Lowestoft.

As she went from room to room, Hyacinth felt her courage growing with every step. This house, standing almost unused for years, was meant to be a home for somebody. It had been in alien hands, now it had come back to a Louise Hyacinth, the great-granddaughter of the first of the name. Ought she not to make every sacrifice to keep it?

The place breathed restfulness; from the windows the views were of sunny fields and woodland, with an occasional glimpse of the roofs and spires of Friendship.

She discussed gardening with Uncle Ben, and the possibility of raising violets for sale, an idea suggested by the sight of some empty frames, and in imagination was already reaping large profits when Aunt Hilda summoned her to lunch.

CHAPTER SIXTH

THE LADY OF THE MANOR

ON one of the stone piers of the bridge Elizabeth sat looking down into the smoothly flowing water. She was bareheaded, and the sunshine brought out sparkles of gold in her brown hair. The stranger coming down the road paused at sight of her.

"Good morning," he said.

At the sound of his voice Elizabeth turned, and then, springing to her feet, cried, "I was just thinking about you." She held out her hand with much cordiality. "The mullein must have turned up," she added.

"It did, both stalks," he said. "I am glad you haven't forgotten the Gray Friar. Is there room for two on the pier?"

"Yes, indeed, and it is such a nice place. The mill isn't running to-day, and the water makes such a lovely, ripply sound."

"So you like Friendship?" the Gray Friar said, taking his seat beside her.

"Yes, I like it, and so does Billy. We have been here two weeks, and Miss Unadilla says there is nothing we haven't seen; but then Friendship is not very large."

"And what has pleased you most?"

Elizabeth considered. "I believe I like Hyacinth Hill best. We have been there twice. If you came down the road, you may have noticed a stile,—that is where the path begins. Billy and I wondered where it led, and so we discovered the house. Such a nice, old-fashioned place, with a sun-dial."

"That reminds me," said the Gray Friar, and taking an apple from his pocket he cut it in two, and offered half to his companion.

Her eyes danced. "Have you been robbing apple trees?" she demanded.

"Not at all," said the Gray Friar, gravely, eating his half.

"Billy says it is all fair to pick them off the ground, that there is something in the Bible about it. Cousin Charles said it did not apply to our case, but Miss Una said if they wanted

their apples, they ought to gather them, and not leave them lying around to tempt people."

"I agree with Miss Una, but my apple was given to me, unless I am much mistaken, by the lady of the manor," said the Gray Friar.

"Really? What did she look like?" Elizabeth's tone was eager.

The Gray Friar gazed down into the sunny water. "She looked — like a young lady," he said.

"We were there only yesterday, and the house was closed as tight as ever." Elizabeth was inclined to be incredulous.

"But this is to-day," the Gray Friar suggested.

"If it was she, I know her name, — Louise Hyacinth Gilderoy. Was she pretty?"

"I think she might be called so."

"What made you think she was the lady of the manor? — That sounds like a story, doesn't it?"

"I inferred it."

"Had you never seen her before?"

The Gray Friar smiled at his questioner. "Yes," he answered.

"Then perhaps you know her?"

"No, I do not."

"It was funny she should give you an apple if you don't know her," said Elizabeth, adding, "I suppose you have heard about her losing her fortune, and how her aunt left all her money to some man nobody knows, when Hyacinth and her brother hadn't anything. I think she might at least have divided it, don't you?"

"It would seem so."

"And since then Louis Gilderoy has been dreadfully hurt, so he cannot walk. I really think that man ought to give them the money." Elizabeth spoke with emphasis.

"Possibly they would not accept it," her companion said, sending a stone skimming downstream.

Elizabeth was surprised. "Don't you think they would?"

Along the edge of the stream the willows bent softly in the breeze, as if to catch their own reflection in the clear water, where the blue sky and the great floating clouds repeated themselves. Swarms of yellow butterflies drifted here and there, bees were busy among the golden-rod by the roadside, and over all lay the warm

sunshine. A silence fell on the occupants of the stone pier. The charm of the September day was upon them.

Elizabeth was the first to speak. "I am glad our paths crossed again," she remarked.

The Gray Friar met her glance with a smile. "So am I," he said.

"I remember what you told me about everybody's having to travel on an unknown path, and about the little plant called happiness," she continued.

"I must say you are a delightful person to preach to."

"You are not a preacher really, are you?" she asked.

"A sort of one. I am not a clergyman, however."

"I am afraid I don't like sermons very much," Elizabeth sighed over the confession.

"Then I have made a mistake in letting you know I was preaching."

She shook her head. "I don't call that preaching. It is pretending — making a story of things. It made me think of a railroad map, with roads going in every direction, and crossing

each other now and then, and everybody going somewhere."

The Gray Friar laughed a little. "It is a very old idea," he said, "almost as old as man. When I was a little boy I was left alone in the world. My mother was dead, and I thought I should never be happy again. I was to be sent away to school among strangers, and I greatly dreaded it. It was then that a kind friend, who was, by the way, a minister, told me the story of an old hero who left his home and went out to seek something better, of whom it is written, 'He went out not knowing whither he went, . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations.'

"I remember how he put his hand on my shoulder, and told me that for each one of us life held something peculiarly our own; it might be some great gift or some simple happiness, but whatever it was, it would satisfy us when we found it. What concerned us most was not to miss it through indolence, or impatience, or lack of courage."

"But how can you find it if you don't know what you are looking for?" Elizabeth asked, her eyes fixed earnestly upon her companion.

"You will know it when you find it, and the way to find it is to be worthy of it," he answered. "Our old hero went out seeking the best. That is what the city of foundations stands for."

Elizabeth leaned forward with her folded arms on her knees. "I wonder if I shall find mine?" she said. "Does it take long?"

"A lifetime often, but then there is always the happiness by the way."

"It makes me think of Arthur and his knights. I suppose they found their city, didn't they?"

"Then from the dawn it seemed there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars."

Quoted the Gray Friar. "That was the last Sir Bedivere knew of the king, you remember."

"Some fair city," Elizabeth repeated, looking far down the stream, a smile on her lips. "You can almost see the spires shining in the distance," she said.

"Yes, you often can, and it is a great help on the journey," the Gray Friar replied.

As the factory whistle at the other end of town proclaimed noon, he rose. "Is Dr. Milward at home to-day?" he asked.

"No, he and Billy have gone to the city," Elizabeth explained.

"Then I shall have to postpone my call till another time. I should like very much to see him again."

"Who was that with you?" Miss Unadilla asked, when Elizabeth joined her on the porch after bidding the Gray Friar good-bye at the gate.

Elizabeth laughed. "I don't know his name, but we call him the Gray Friar, Billy and I. We met him in the woods last summer, and showed him which road to take, and he talked to us. Then we met him again in the station at Washington, and he travelled part way with us, and now here he is again."

Miss Una looked doubtful. "I don't think, my dear, that you ought to talk to a man you do not know."

"He knows Cousin Charles, he said so, and he is coming to see him the next time he is in Friendship," said Elizabeth.

As she ate her lunch Elizabeth was thinking

of the Gray Friar, wondering if he could have been mistaken about the lady of the manor. She thought of asking Miss Una to walk up to Hyacinth Hill with her that afternoon; but Miss Martha Doane came in with her sewing, and put an end to this project.

Elizabeth resented Miss Martha's numerous questions and comments. What concern of that lady's was it who made her dresses, how long her mother would be away, and what ailed Juliet? She stood it for a while, then slipped away. She would go by herself to Hyacinth Hill, she decided.

So it was that Miss Gilderoy, out again on a tour of investigation, suddenly encountered a little girl at the gate which opened from the wood path into the meadow. She carried her hat by its elastic, and her face grew rosy red as she stood still in evident embarrassment.

"I am afraid we startled each other. I was not expecting to see anybody in this quiet spot," Miss Gilderoy said, with a smile.

"I didn't know you were here. That is — the Gray Friar said you were, but I thought he might be mistaken —"

"So you came to find out? Now that I am here, won't you come in? Are you a neighbor?" Miss Gilderoy, when she spoke in that winning manner and with a smile in her eyes, was hard to resist.

The newcomer surrendered at once. "I am Elizabeth Sayre," she said, "and I am staying with my cousin, Dr. Milward, just the other side of the mill."

The young lady nodded. "I know," she said, "and I suppose it is unnecessary to add that I am Miss Gilderoy."

They walked along the wood path side by side, Miss Gilderoy made polite inquiries for Dr. Milward, whom she remembered, and Elizabeth answered demurely, with frequent glances of admiration at her companion.

"Now tell me," the young lady added, leading the way across the grass to the stone bench, "who it was that said I was here?"

Elizabeth's eyes met hers with a merry light in them. "I don't know who he is. I call him the Gray Friar. He came by this morning while I was sitting on the bridge, and he said

he had seen you, and that you had given him an apple. I had half."

"Indeed!" Miss Gilderoy laughed a little. "And he told you who I was?"

"He said you were the lady of the manor, unless he was mistaken."

"Your Gray Friar seems to be a person of keen perceptions. There is something in the title that suits his gravity."

"I like him because he is so strong and kind-looking," Elizabeth said, and she went on to explain about her various encounters with the stranger.

"And you are ignorant of the real name of this benevolent gentleman who goes about restoring lost property and sharing his reward, who appears and disappears here and there all over the country?"

"Now you are making fun," Elizabeth exclaimed, half disapproving. "Billy and I thought perhaps he was a minister, but he says he isn't, although he sometimes preaches," she added.

"He looks it." Miss Gilderoy bent her eyes thoughtfully on the grass. She rather wondered

who this stranger could be. As Elizabeth said, he was strong and kind-looking, and he had known all along who she was. Presently she asked Elizabeth if she would be in Friendship all winter.

"Then I shall see you often, I hope," she added, "for I expect to be here myself."

Elizabeth dimpled and flushed with pleasure. "I am so glad you have come," she spoke with ardor. "It seems as if the princess had waked up. The day Billy and I first came up here it made us think of the enchanted palace and the Sleeping Beauty. Were you inside fast asleep, really?" she asked merrily.

There was no mistaking the admiration in her eyes. Miss Gilderoy bent quickly and kissed her.

"Then it is settled that we are to be friends," the young lady said when they parted later on at the meadow gate. "And I wish to know Billy, too."

"Yes, indeed," Elizabeth responded joyously. "I hope you'll come very soon to stay."

"Billy, you've no idea — she is lovely!"

"Who is?" William asked, adjusting his tie before the mirror.

"Why, I have just been telling you—Miss Gilderoy. She smiles at you with her eyes, and you wish you might hug her, and—well, she is no ordinary person, I can tell you," Elizabeth ended rather lamely.

"What did the Gray Friar have to say?"

"I don't know. He said a good deal. It was he who told me she was here. The 'lady of the manor,' he called her."

"What did he come for?"

"He didn't say."

"Did you find out his name?"

Elizabeth shook her head.

"Pshaw!" said William.

"I don't care, you wouldn't have asked him, either."

CHAPTER SEVENTH

OLD FRIENDS

“**I** REMEMBER her so well as a little girl,” said Miss Unadilla. “She was in my Sunday-school class for a while, and I saw her once afterward at the time of her father’s funeral. The Gilderoy’s are all buried in the graveyard back of the church. She must have been about fifteen then. As an old friend of the family I went, and I can see her now, standing so slender and straight in her black dress, under the old willow tree, clasping her brother’s hand. I ventured to speak to her. I hardly expected her to know me, but she did. There was something very sweet about Hyacinth.”

“There is now,” said Elizabeth. Like Mrs. Parton, she was enjoying the distinction of having met and talked with Miss Gilderoy, and Miss Una’s interest was great enough to offset Billy’s indifference.

"Do you know," she added, "I almost hate that man who got the money."

"My dear, you mustn't say that," Miss Unadilla protested. "He couldn't exactly help it."

Elizabeth carried her books into the study. There were certain lessons she recited with Billy to Dr. Milward, for others she went three times a week to Mrs. Graham's school on Main Street, while Billy had a tutor from a neighboring town.

The minister had his own peculiar methods, or what might have seemed to Mrs. Graham lack of method. Discussion was frequently the order of the day. He liked to talk, and found these intelligent children stimulating, and their independence of thought very amusing. If he sometimes allowed himself to be enticed from the main road into fascinating by-paths, these excursions were never quite fruitless; and not being bound to cover given ground in a given time, no harm was done.

As William could not use his eyes, it was Elizabeth's favorite device to pretend he was the almost blind historian, Prescott, and she his amanuensis, searching encyclopædias and

dictionaries. The one objection her brother found to this was her habit of holding up for his imitation the great historian's invariable cheerfulness. Billy sometimes wished he had never been heard of, for he spoiled the pure satisfaction of many a growl.

What William had named the histo-geographo-literature lesson — for Dr. Milward liked to correlate his subjects — was drawing to its end this morning when Elizabeth suddenly interrupted.

"There she is, and she is coming in! Cousin Charles, please excuse me, but mayn't Billy peep? It is Miss Gilderoy."

Miss Gilderoy it undoubtedly was, for Pearl entered presently with a card. The minister studied it deliberately. "You may show her in," he said, and dismissed the children.

Elizabeth would have liked to linger, but William seized upon her with a suddenness she could not resist, and pulled her through one door as the visitor entered by the other.

"I hope you haven't forgotten Hyacinth Gilderoy," she said, advancing as the minister rose to meet her.

He took her hand, thinking Betsy's rhapsodies not so unreasonable after all. "So this is the little Hyacinth I used to know, who used to take long walks with me? I am very glad to see her again."

He gave her a chair and took another beside her. "I hear you are coming to Friendship to stay," he said.

Miss Gilderoy smiled. "Yesterday I was sure, this morning I have doubts again. That is why I am here, partly. I want some advice from an old friend."

Dr. Milward did not speak, but the expression of his dark eyes was kind as well as keen. He bent his white head to listen.

"All my friends at home are opposed to my coming here to live," she continued. "But I must live somewhere, and I think perhaps it would be good for Louis at Hyacinth Hill. He says we have practically nothing; but I have the old place and he has a little money, so, looked at in another way, it seems to me we have practically something."

"There are usually two ways of looking at a thing," said Dr. Milward. "The disciple, you re-

member, thought the loaves and fishes practically nothing, and apologized for mentioning them."

"Thank you," Hyacinth said with a smile. "If I stay in the city, I am afraid I shall grow narrow and envious. Here I can raise flowers and be friendly, as Mrs. Parton says."

"Friendship is a good place to come to. I ought to know after thirty years' experience. As for expense, I should say it costs about half as much to live here as in town."

"You don't know how pleasant it is to find some old friends here who haven't forgotten me, and who call me Hyacinth. It has given me already a home feeling." After a minute's silence she continued: "It seems a little strange, doesn't it, Dr. Milward, that all these changes should have come to me just when I had determined to live quite differently? I mean I was tired of pleasure, and I meant to be useful. I had plans — there is so much one can do to help. I had come to feel ashamed that I had so much and was doing so little. And now I can't do anything. It was like being told that I was not needed when I thought I was going to be so useful."

The minister smiled. "I should say, Hyacinth, that the interpretation is, you are needed somewhere else. God doesn't make mistakes, though we sometimes give him the credit for our own. I am sorry, indeed, that so much trouble has come to you, but I see an unconquerable soul looking out of your eyes. I cannot quite understand your aunt's will," he added.

"It is of no use to think about it now," Hyacinth said. "I regret it more on Louis's account than my own. Aunt Gilderoy had every right to leave her money as she saw fit. My uncle left half his estate to my father, you know. Louis is convinced that it was a case of undue influence on the part of this person to whom she left the money, but there was really little or no evidence."

"I imagine not. Madam Gilderoy was not a woman to be easily influenced. She had her own ideas, and she kept secret the fact that she was educating this boy. I was one of the few who knew of it. I have heard little or nothing of him for ten years. Martin Whitney is his name, is it not?"

"I believe so." Miss Gilderoy spoke as if

the name could have no possible interest for her. "Louis says he is quite an ordinary person. I had a singular communication from him, asking for an interview. He said I probably knew there were matters upon which Madam Gilderoy had desired him to consult me." There was something like disdain in Hyacinth's voice.

"And you refused to see him?"

"Certainly. As I was leaving town for a day or two, and knew of no possible reason for an interview, I declined the honor."

"Are you not a little unreasonable?" Dr. Milward asked, smiling.

"Am I? Yes, I suppose it does make me rather rebellious when I think of Louis needing everything, and this man with probably a great deal more than he knows what to do with."

"Wasn't there something in the will about the way in which the money was to be used?"

"She hoped he would use it in carrying out certain plans which they had discussed together, I believe. He was not bound in any way."

Miss Unadilla with Elizabeth and Billy were on the porch when Miss Gilderoy came out fol-

lowed by the minister. Miss Una had her embroidery, and though almost as eager as Elizabeth to see the visitor, she wore her usual air of serenity. Elizabeth was reading aloud in a jerky manner, with frequent pauses to listen for the study door; William, stretched comfortably on the settee, was calmly curious.

His curiosity was lost in some other emotion, when, after claiming Miss Una as an old friend, and greeting Elizabeth with a smile of comradeship, she turned to him, with, "This is Billy, I know." From that moment he was her staunch admirer.

Miss Gilderoy was going back to town that afternoon, to return probably in a week or two. "I shall come back with the delightful feeling of already having friends here," she said, adding a little wistfully, "I know you will be good to my brother. He is very despondent, poor boy. I do so hope to be able to make life brighter for him."

Good to him? Of course they would be. He shared the radiance that fell upon everything connected with the lady of the manor.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

LOUIS

“**I** DON'T care what you do, but I think it is all very foolish.”

Hyacinth looked at her brother. “Does that mean that whatever I do you will consider foolish? If so, it rather simplifies matters.”

“It is of no use for me to say anything. You have done as you chose all along; but as I tell you, I don't care. What difference does it make to me where I am?—a helpless log!”

Hyacinth was silent. She was very gentle with Louis. Remembering him as he had been only a short time ago, so bright and engaging, so full of boyish devotion toward her, she could not do enough for him now. She had been blind to the selfishness that lay beneath his amiability, and a lavish generosity that really cost him nothing; a selfishness that had risen to the surface since this double calamity had fallen on him, and that

blinded him to everything but his own unhappiness.

“He ought to recover,” his physician had said to her that morning. “He has youth and a good constitution in his favor, but he needs to be roused. His mental state is deplorable. Give him change; interest him in something.”

Easy to say, but how could she arouse him? Perhaps Hyacinth Hill would be the very worst place for him. Yet she could not leave him any longer at the sanitarium, and what else offered? She must make the venture.

If her destination had been the heart of Africa, instead of a village fifty miles away, her friends could hardly have said good-bye with greater solemnity that bright October day. As she sat beside her brother's chair in the baggage-car, which had been found to be the most comfortable way of making the short journey, Hyacinth unfolded an afternoon paper, and read in the society column the announcement that Miss Gilderoy and her brother had left the city to make their home at the old family place, Hyacinth Hill, near Friendship.

“And hereafter Miss Gilderoy will be lost to

sight," she said gayly. "If I am to believe my friends, I am going into oblivion."

Louis looked at his sister. He admired her very much. He had always been proud of her when she came down to see him at college. Forgetting himself for a moment, he wondered at her cheerfulness under these changed conditions.

"You speak as if you did not mind it at all," he remarked.

"Dear, I shall not, if only you will be half happy," she replied.

Louis was annoyed. Happy indeed! Let any one try it in his condition. It did not occur to him that he had never made any effort himself. He was convinced that nothing short of hopeless despondency was to be expected of him.

At first the change did undoubtedly brighten Louis a little. It was impossible not to feel the pleasantness of the old house, where with some degree of independence he could wheel himself about from room to room, where he could sit on the porch or be rolled around outside by Ranney, Uncle Ben's grandson. Hyacinth began to hope that it might be the beginning of decided improvement.

Meeting William and Elizabeth on the road several days after their arrival, she ventured to ask them to come up to the house to see her brother.

The children were greatly interested in him, particularly Elizabeth, whose tender heart had been deeply touched by the story of his injury. Suppose Billy had been hurt like that! They had even made plans for amusing Louis, and were eager to begin.

The invalid's chair was beside the sun-dial, where the warm sunshine made the crisp air a delight. On his knees lay a magazine, but he was not reading.

"Louis, I have brought some friends of mine to see you," Hyacinth announced gayly.

Louis turned his handsome, unhappy face toward his sister as she crossed the grass, followed by her companions.

"You know very well I do not wish to see people," he said.

"Louis hasn't seen any one but doctors and invalids for so long he is not very sociable," Hyacinth explained in a tone she might have used toward a naughty baby, adding, "I want

you to know Elizabeth and William Sayre, dear. They are at Dr. Milward's this winter, almost our nearest neighbors."

Louis gave a curt nod in their direction, then deliberately opening his magazine became to all appearances absorbed in its pages.

Elizabeth gazed at him in astonishment. Could this disagreeable person be Miss Hyacinth's brother? She quite forgot to be sorry for him. She felt both indignant and embarrassed. On the impulse of the moment she slipped her hand through Miss Gilderoy's arm. Billy stooped to pat the collie who was offering them a more gentlemanly greeting.

"If Louis doesn't want us, we will go to the house. You have never been inside, have you?" There was the faintest possible tremor in Hyacinth's voice.

They were only too happy to leave the gloomy figure by the sun-dial, and their hostess presently recovered herself, and was as charming as Louis was cross. She led them about from room to room, pointing out some odd and interesting things, in particular some old blue platters and portrait pitchers behind the glass

doors of the dining-room cupboard. She took down a tea-pot with a scroll border around the cover, on which were mottoes, such as "Be industrious," "Be virtuous." "Some day I shall ask you to take tea with me," she said.

Elizabeth was charmed with the house. "I should like to live here myself," she declared.

"I hope you will come often," Miss Gilderoy said. "And you must forgive poor Louis's unsociability. He does not like to see people, but I am so anxious to have him become accustomed to it."

"Shall you go again?" Billy asked as they walked home.

Elizabeth considered. "Yes, I think so. At first I thought I shouldn't, but Miss Hyacinth seems to want us. He was horrid, but maybe he'll be nicer another time."

"He hasn't the manners of a pig."

"No, he hasn't. But then it is dreadful not to be able to walk."

"He reminded me of one of those griffins on the doorstep of the Whittredge house. Don't you know?"

"We'll call him the Griffin," Elizabeth suggested.

"It is a clear case of Beauty and the Beast, isn't it?" William added.

CHAPTER NINTH

SOME FAIR CITY

THE first fire of the season crackled and blazed on the study hearth. Before it, in a high-backed chair with broad, protecting ears, Elizabeth sat, her eyes on the flames, her thoughts far away. The only other light came from Dr. Milward's shaded lamp across the room.

Miss Una had gone to her nephew's accompanied by Billy, and Elizabeth feeling a little lonely had slipped softly in and stowed herself in the cavernous chair. Cyrus followed and lay stretched in lazy enjoyment at her feet.

Perhaps it was a touch of homesickness that spoiled the interest of her story-book this evening. A letter lay in her lap—a letter full of motherly admonitions and caressing words that stirred a longing for the dear writer.

“I am glad you are learning to keep your

room in order, dearest," the letter said. "I have no doubt you will have developed quite a domestic taste when I see you again. But remember, Elizabeth, not to stoop or stride, and be sure your ribbons are always fresh. I wish I knew more about your surroundings. I feel as if I had neglected you in the haste to get Juliet away. I am only half satisfied to have you and Billy in that out-of-the-way place. I trust you are happy, darling. Don't forget to read a verse every day from your little book."

How every word recalled her graceful, charming mother! How pleasant it would be to have them all—father, mother, and Juliet, with Billy and herself—here before the fire! Elizabeth felt a longing for the family life. Not that they had often been together at home. Her mother and sister were always going somewhere; her father absorbed in his profession. She and Billy had been left to go their own way pretty much in the last year or two.

Her mother would not like Friendship; Elizabeth was sure of that, but for herself she was glad her path lay through it. Her thoughts often went back to this favorite fancy,—the

journey into the unknown country, and in the glowing fire as she watched it she discovered hills and valleys and winding roads, and the gleam of distant spires.

"What do you see, Elizabeth?" The minister crossed the room and bent to warm his hands at the blaze, conscious now for the first time of her presence.

Suddenly recalled, she lifted dreamy eyes to his face. "'Some fair city,'" she said, using the words the Gray Friar had quoted. "I was wondering when I should find mine."

Dr. Milward drew up a chair and sat down. There was a pleasant light in his eyes as he asked, "What do you mean, my dear?"

So it happened there in the firelight that he heard all about the Gray Friar. He had indeed heard mention of this person before, but had given little heed; now he listened attentively.

"Cousin Charles, who was the hero who went out into the unknown, seeking a city? Was it a Pilgrim Father? Billy thought so."

Dr. Milward smiled. "One of the first, I should say. Have you never heard of Abraham?"

"Oh, is it in the Bible? Why, of course I have!" Elizabeth exclaimed. "The Gray Friar said it did not mean really a city," she continued, "but that that was just a —"

"Symbol?" suggested the minister.

"Yes — a symbol for what he was seeking."

"'Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city,'" Dr. Milward repeated.

"I hope I shall not miss it," Elizabeth said after a silence.

"If you make the best of your journey each day, there is no fear of that. It is only those who sit still and refuse to seek, or climb, of whom God is ashamed; for whom there will be no city."

Dr. Milward threw more wood on the fire, setting free a cloud of sparks. Cyrus lifted startled ears, then returned to slumber. His two companions watched the flames in silence. They both had the Gray Friar in mind, but the minister saw a small, freckled-faced boy who sat on a doorstep the picture of loneliness and despair. He felt again the cold, reluctant hand in his own as he led the child to a quiet place

on the hillside and bade him look at the sky and be brave, for every one must face the unknown sometime. He saw the response to his appeal in the lifted head and the straightening of the sturdy shoulders, and the dawning in the pale face of the hope that knows no fear.

This had been many years ago. The boy had grown to manhood in a Western university town, proving himself so far as was known worthy of the opportunity which had been given him. More than once of late it had occurred to the minister to wonder if the man would meet the new obligations which had so unexpectedly come to him, with the boy's spirit. At least, if he and Betsy's Gray Friar were the same, he had not forgotten the old story.

"I should not fancy being in Martin's place, with all that money," he thought; then aloud he asked, "Elizabeth, when did your friend, the Gray Friar as you call him, say he would be in town again?"

"He didn't say, Cousin Charles — only that he would come to see you next time."

And now their fireside musings were brought to an end by the entrance of Miss Unadilla

and William, fresh from the heart of town, supplied with many little items of village talk.

Elizabeth gave her arm-chair to Miss Una and joined Cyrus on the rug. William drew up a foot-stool.

"Mrs. Parton came in while we were at Thomas's," began Miss Una, drawing off her gloves.

"Mrs. Parton is jolly good fun," William observed.

"She is a very good woman," said Miss Una, as if in defence. "Well, we were talking about the Gilderoy's. Everybody likes Hyacinth, it seems. Even Martha Doane says she isn't a bit stuck up; but as for Louis —"

"Nobody has any use for him," concluded Billy.

"Mrs. Parton says he was positively rude to her, and spoke to his sister in a way that made her want to box his ears. She says she can stand a good deal from the colonel when he has gout, but if he behaved half as outrageously as Louis does, she'd leave the house."

"It is partly Hyacinth's fault," Dr. Milward remarked.

"She is entirely too good to him," said Elizabeth, caressing the cat.

"Poor boy, I wish there was something we could do for him." Miss Una smoothed her gloves thoughtfully.

Dr. Milward shook his head. He, too, had experienced Louis's rudeness. "There must be, of course, some good in the boy, some remnants of right feeling, if one knew how to reach them."

As they went upstairs to bed Elizabeth said, "Billy, I have found out who the Gray Friar's hero is — Abraham."

"Abraham?" Billy repeated.

"Yes, Cousin Charles told me. Do you know I have been thinking, Billy, that if anybody could cheer Louis up, it would be the Gray Friar."

"They are not very likely to meet," said Billy.

CHAPTER TENTH

CHIEFLY TALK

“**A**RE you ready, Betsy?”

“Can’t you wait, Billy, till I finish my grammar lesson? I have some poetry to analyze. It will only take a minute.”

“It will take *only* a minute, you should say, though that isn’t true. I’ll give you ten.”

“Do stop talking if you want me to hurry.” Elizabeth opened her book, while her brother proceeded to amuse himself and annoy Cyrus by means of a broom straw. Miss Unadilla sat by the window sewing.

“I’ll do it aloud, that’s quicker,” Elizabeth said, beginning —

“‘We were the first that ever burst’ —

We is a personal pronoun —”

“Let us hope we’ll be the last to meet such a fate,” murmured Billy.

Miss Unadilla laughed.

Elizabeth looked up. "Oh — well — of course I mean —

"‘We were the first that ever burst
Into the open sea.’"

Now, Billy, don't make fun. Miss Una, he is tormenting Cyrus."

"I know it," Miss Una said plaintively. Her heart was particularly tender where Cyrus was concerned.

"I won't do it any more," William protested, for he was fond of Miss Una. He sauntered from the room, to return a moment later with the announcement that Miss Martha Doane was coming up the street.

Elizabeth rose. "I'll go, then. I don't like Miss Martha, she asks so many questions."

"You haven't much chance when she is around," Billy agreed.

"She gets her pronouns so mixed," continued Elizabeth, ignoring Billy. "She asked me how Miss Unadilla was, and said, 'I saw she and Dr. Milward going to church,' and she shows her teeth so when she smiles."

"My dear, I think you are very critical," said Miss Una, "so do many people."

"Her smile is all on the outside," William explained.

Miss Una regarded him thoughtfully. "There is some truth in that," she said.

"Thank you," cried William, with a profound bow.

"It is a pity the good things he says have to be mixed up with so many foolish ones," Elizabeth remarked, seizing an opportunity to get even.

"You just wish you could say them yourself," William retorted. Then going back to the subject in hand, he continued, "Now Miss Hyacinth smiles with her eyes."

"I said that myself," cried Elizabeth.

"I don't dispute it. I simply mention it as a fact. What I want to know is, what happens when she does it?"

"You smile back and want to hug her."

"Now, Betsy, you never know what I mean. When she holds her lips shut, how do you know she is smiling?"

"It must be her soul looking out. Don't you think so, Miss Una?"

"I think you and Billy had better go," Miss Una said, laughing.

The discussion was ended by Miss Martha's step on the porch. The children disappeared with lightning despatch, and a few minutes later were walking up the road toward Hyacinth Hill. William carried some books which Miss Una was sending to the Griffin, as they called Louis.

Since that first uncomfortable encounter they had seen Louis but once, and on this occasion he had been wrapped in gloomy indifference, not quite so disagreeable as open rudeness; but even the charms of their beautiful Miss Hyacinth could not lure them often into the presence of this ogre.

On the other side of the bridge they overtook Belle Parton, who greeted them cordially. Belle had shown herself very friendly. She had called with her mother one evening, and afterward at school had taken Elizabeth under her protection in a way which, if slightly patronizing, was also flattering, for she was one of the older girls and an acknowledged leader.

Mrs. Parton said Belle couldn't decide whether she was a young lady or a little girl, and so gravitated between the two. At times under the weight of her sixteen years she was oppressively

dignified, at others she cast dignity to the winds and was the flyaway Belle of old.

This side was uppermost to-day, as it could hardly help being, in the crisp air, with the maples and sweet gum trees all ablaze with red and gold, and the leaves lying thick on the path. They rustled along gayly, tossed leaves at each other, ran races, and laughed at everything and nothing, full of the joy of living.

Belle lost her hair ribbon and had to stop at the stile to put her locks in order, while William went back to look for it.

"Do you know," she said to Elizabeth, "you remind me a little of Rosalind Whittredge."

"Do I?" Betsy exclaimed, much gratified, for she had heard before of this wonderful Rosalind, who was Belle's most intimate friend, around whom centred all the interesting happenings of a certain summer four years ago, of which Belle was fond of telling. She was better than a guide-book for pointing out the interesting features and landmarks of Friendship.

There was the Whittredge house with the griffins on the doorstep, where Rosalind's grandmother lived in semi-seclusion, and her beautiful

but haughty daughter, Miss Genevieve. There was the Gilpin place at the other end of the town, which the Allan Whittredges now occupied, the scene of more than one adventure in the days when it stood deserted, and the lawsuit over the Gilpin will was going on. There was the magician's shop, where the lost ring had come to light, where Morgan, the cabinet-maker, still worked.

"I had a letter from Rosalind yesterday," Belle continued. "She is coming to spend Christmas, so we shall all be together again."

Billy came up the road, waving aloft a stick with a bright red ribbon attached.

"Thank you, William, I'll tie it tight this time. You know," Belle went on as she knotted her ribbon vigorously, "we used to have a secret society called the Arden Foresters. It seems rather childish now, but we keep our badges and always wear them when we are together. Did you ever notice mine?" she held out a little enamelled oak leaf.

The others admired it and asked about the society.

"It isn't really a society now, except that we

try to remember the motto, 'Good in everything,' " Belle explained.

" 'Good in everything,' " William repeated. " I wonder if there is any in Louis Gilderoy ? "

" He is horrid, isn't he ? " said Belle. " And Miss Hyacinth is such a dear. Still, I suppose there is some good in him. Jack, my brother, went to school with Louis one year and liked him ever so much. He was the most popular boy there, he said. "

" Do you know, Billy, " Elizabeth said when they left Belle at the turn of the road, " I wish somebody would tell Louis about the journey and the city, — the Gray Friar's idea. I have been thinking about it, and it seems to me it makes it much easier to stand things if you know they are part of the way, and that there is something good ahead of you. "

" He'd think it was silly, " William remarked coolly. " You know, Betsy, you are always taking up some notion about somebody or something. Of course, I know I have to stand my eyes, but that does not make it easy. You see you haven't ever had much the matter with you. "

" No, I haven't, " she assented meekly; " but

sometimes I'm homesick. And then, Billy, you don't understand. I didn't mean just bearing things, but being glad of them if they belonged to our path."

William found this quite too lofty a plane, and appealed to Miss Hyacinth, whom they found superintending Uncle Ben in some outdoor work. She considered the question thoughtfully, leaning against the sun-dial.

"Perhaps we may be able to look back at hard things, and be glad of them; but to be glad at the time is another matter," she said.

"But it makes it easier if you know there is something good ahead of you," Elizabeth urged. "And there always is, if you are seeking it. The Gray Friar said so, and Cousin Charles."

"We can't stand up against so much authority, Billy;" Hyacinth drew Elizabeth's hand within her arm as she spoke. "She is probably right. Have you had any more encounters with your friend, the Gray Friar, of late?" she asked.

They walked up to the house still talking, William being in an argumentative mood. "Betsy is always making believe," he said.

"It is such fun to pretend, and I suppose you

have to give it up when you are grown," Elizabeth was saying regretfully as Hyacinth ushered them into the sitting room, where her brother was occupied with some drawing materials.

"On the contrary," Louis said, looking up with a half smile, "you'll pretend more than ever, then."

Elizabeth surveyed him with gravity. "Then when I am grown I shall pretend to be nice," she replied.

Hyacinth smiled. "There will be no need for any pretence, dear, I am sure."

Louis's face showed a grim amusement. He was less gloomy to-day, and actually went to the length of expressing his thanks for the books.

On the way home William asked, "Betsy, did you mean what you said to Louis?"

"What did I say?"

"About pretending to be nice when you were grown."

"Why, yes, I meant it."

"But I mean, did you mean that he is not nice?"

Betsy opened her eyes. "I don't think he is, do you?"

“Upon my word, Betsy, I don’t know whether you are clever or stupid.”

Elizabeth laughed. “I think I must be clever, Billy, if you can’t understand me.”

“Anyhow, he thought you meant it,” William said.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

BETSY SPEAKS HER MIND

WILLIAM was right, Louis had felt Elizabeth's remark. He laughed at it, and spoke of her carelessly to Hyacinth as a bright little thing; yet, though he would not for a moment acknowledge to himself that it hurt, he could not forget it.

He also remembered the wide, surprised eyes she had turned upon him at their first meeting. Even then he had felt something like a twinge of shame, but only a twinge. Since his accident it had not occurred to him to care what any one thought of him, or, indeed, to imagine that anything like patience or amiability could be asked of one in his condition. By her devotion, Hyacinth helped this attitude of mind. She was always the same, no matter how trying and ill-tempered her brother might be. Through Eliza-

beth's eyes he had had a faint glimpse of himself as others saw him.

He found himself dwelling upon it in an absurd way. He felt Elizabeth did not appreciate what he had to endure, and he wished for an opportunity to defend himself. In the meantime he became a little less moody, and more responsive to his sister's efforts to divert him. Hyacinth began to be lighter of heart.

But poor Louis had lived too long in the dungeon of despair to breathe freely outside for long. The reaction came. In the first place, November began with a week of rain and gloom, which naturally had its effect upon the invalid's spirits. Then Hyacinth, unable in her disappointment to see that this was inevitable and would not last, was not so wise as she might have been. She annoyed her brother with attentions and suggestions, until at length the torrent of his impatience and misery burst with unexpected fury upon her head.

It was over the trifle of an uncut magazine. There was no paper-cutter at hand, his own knife had been mislaid, Ranney had gone to town on an errand, and Hyacinth was not within call.

When after half an hour's absence she returned, Louis greeted her with some bitter remark about his own helplessness and the forgetfulness of other people.

"Dear, I am so sorry," Hyacinth said, hastening to find the paper-cutter. "Let me do it for you," she added, advancing to take the magazine.

"For mercy's sake, let me alone!" he cried, throwing the book violently across the room. "There has got to be an end to this — chained like a bear to a log!"

"Oh, Louis, please don't," his sister begged. "Don't say such dreadful things."

But Louis, with a savage satisfaction in causing pain, continued to pour forth a torrent of rebellious words. It was more than Hyacinth could stand. Covering her face with her hands she hurried from the room without seeing Elizabeth, who stood just outside the door, in the hall, an astonished and indignant witness of the unhappy scene.

There was a moment's silence in which Elizabeth tried to decide whether to follow Hyacinth with sympathy, or to speak her mind to Louis.

Her indignation won the day; like an avenging fury she faced Louis, pushing the door to behind her and standing against it.

"You are mean and horrid—I despise you," she said, stamping her foot in emphasis. Her cheeks flamed, her eyes shone. "I don't care if you can't walk—you don't deserve to. There are lots of people who have as hard a time as you.—Suppose you were blind and deaf?—You are not brave a bit. If you were a soldier, you would run away. You have no right to say such things to Miss Hyacinth. She is sweet and good. I don't know how she came to have such a brother." Betsy's eloquence began to falter.

"Upon my word!" Louis exclaimed, recovering from his first surprise, "but you are a fury."

"I am glad of one thing,—that I am not your sister. Perhaps you are glad, too, but you aren't as glad as I am. I despise you!" With this parting shot Elizabeth retired.

A storm clears the atmosphere; an electric shock is tonic in its effects; the force of her indignation tore from Louis's eyes for the mo-

ment the veil of self-pity and gave him a new and vivid picture of himself — no mere glimpse this time. He was not so angry as the occasion seemed to warrant. How pretty Elizabeth looked with her scarlet cheeks and blazing eyes! Of course it was wrong of him to speak to his sister as he had, but she knew he did not mean it. Elizabeth did not understand. He very much wished she had not heard. She called him a coward, Louis Gilderoy, who dared do anything! He had never before been called a coward. It was not true, but did she really think it? She said she despised him. The more he thought of it the more troubled he grew.

Hyacinth, meanwhile, was finding the journey of life altogether too difficult to be borne. She had shed some bitter tears over Louis's unkind words, but it was not in her nature to find relief in this way, and now she sat in her own room, gazing straight before her with dull, unhappy eyes.

Things could not go on in this way, and yet what was to be done? Before her a blank, gray wall seemed to rise, shutting out hope and making courage a vain word.

It was not only Louis, though he was her greatest trouble. Every day she was making fresh discoveries about the cost of living. She was haunted by the fear that she had been wrong to come to Hyacinth Hill to live, and side by side with the fear grew her love for the place and her desire to keep it. A very small part of her aunt's fortune would have made things so different. Hyacinth seldom allowed her thoughts to dwell upon this, but to-day she was conscious of a feeling of bitterness toward Madam Gilderoy that she could not control. For a moment she almost regretted her refusal to contest the will.

The stillness of the house struck her with sudden alarm. Suppose something had happened to Louis! She had no idea how long she had been sitting there. She hurried into the hall, pausing at the head of the stairs. The sound of her brother's voice speaking to Ranney reassured her and she returned to her room. For the first time since his accident there was some anger in her heart toward Louis. She did not wish to see him just yet.

As she sat down again, her eyes rested on

the miniature of her great-grandmother which hung over her work-table. This was the Louise Hyacinth who had brought Hyacinth Hill into the Gilderoy family; had it come into the possession of the second Louise Hyacinth only to pass into the hands of strangers?

The face was gentle and fair, and wore a smile of eighteenth-century serenity. Hyacinth felt herself growing calmer as she looked at it. She knew little about the life of her great-grandmother; but, whatever it had been, she had borne it, and it was over now. It was some faint comfort to think that troubles could not last forever. She must do the best she could; but how she dreaded the long evening and Louis's gloomy face.

A knock disturbed her. It was Ranney who handed her a folded bit of paper. She opened it and read, "Dear Hyacinth, Forgive me for being such a beast. — Louis."

When before had he ever asked her forgiveness? Hyacinth was deeply touched, every other feeling gave way to pitiful tenderness. The dark day was coming to an early end, and she was glad it was over as she lit the candles

on her dressing-table. She dressed hastily, stopping for a moment, however, to consider what she should put on, and then choosing a gown she knew her brother liked.

The sitting room was all brightness and cheer when she entered, and Louis had his art books spread out before him. Hyacinth could not trust her voice to refer to the note, but standing beside him she laid her hand on his shoulder.

Louis lifted his eyes. "How pretty you look in that white thing," he said. "I didn't know but you had taken a vow to wear nothing but brown."

"Thank you. I suppose I have been rather a fright, but I did not think any one cared." Hyacinth smiled on him brightly.

Something in the words gave Louis a pang. He watched her cross the room. How graceful and charming she was! How accustomed to admiration—and now nobody cared.

Hyacinth herself was far from meaning anything of the kind. Now that the storm had passed, she was too happy for such regrets. Hope had taken possession of her once more.

She enlivened the supper table with an account of her shopping expedition that morning, and an encounter with Miss Martha Doane; and afterward, going to the piano, she played as Louis liked to hear her, snatches of music and bits of old songs. The evening which had loomed so drearily in prospect passed most cheerfully.

Hyacinth knew nothing of Elizabeth's visit, and Louis did not mention it.

CHAPTER TWELFTH

A FRIENDLY COMPACT

“**I** HAVE done something dreadful!”

Dr. Milward lifted his eyes from the sermon he was writing and looked in some surprise at the excited young person who had entered his quiet study like a whirlwind, and now faced him on the other side of the table, with this startling announcement.

Carefully laying aside his fountain-pen, he asked, “What have you done, my dear?”

“I told Louis Gilderoy that he was horrid, and that I despised him.”

A gleam of amusement passed over the minister's face and was gone. “Those are strong words,” he said gravely. “Despise is from the Latin *despicere*, meaning ‘to look down upon.’ Horrid is ‘frightful, hideous.’”

Elizabeth bit her lip. “I suppose I oughtn't

to have said it. I didn't mean exactly that, but — Cousin Charles, he *was* horrid, and to Miss Hyacinth. Do you think I ought to say I am sorry?"

"Not unless you are, my child. If after thinking over it you find you spoke too strongly, you can say so."

Dr. Milward's serene and analytical reception of her confession had a quieting effect. Elizabeth remembered that this was an hour when he did not like to be disturbed, so she went back to the deserted sitting room. Miss Unadilla and William were neither of them to be found, and there was nothing to do but cuddle Cyrus on the sofa and wait.

She had run most of the way from Hyacinth Hill in a state of excitement that did not allow of any connected thought. Now in the stillness, with Cyrus's contented purring in her ear, she began to consider what she had done. She had told the truth, she was sure of that, and yet when she remembered Louis sitting there quite helpless in his chair, she was almost sorry. When she thought of Miss Hyacinth, and of Louis's cruel words, she was not sorry at

all. The more she went over it, the more uncertain she was.

"Did you really say that, Betsy? Good for you!" Billy cried when he heard the story.

Miss Unadilla, unfastening her wraps, listened gravely. "Perhaps he deserved it," she said doubtfully.

"Of course he did," said William. "Didn't he answer back, Betsy?"

"No, for I ran away. He said I was a fury. I don't suppose he will ever speak to me again," Elizabeth replied.

Her brother chuckled. "I rather guess he won't."

"Do you think I was very wrong, Miss Una? It wasn't any of my business, but I couldn't help it." Elizabeth's eyes were appealing.

Miss Unadilla rocked back and forth thoughtfully. "I don't know," she said. "I can't see how you dared to do it. It was very wrong in him to speak so to his sister; but men don't know how to endure illness, they are generally unreasonable, one has to be patient with them. I suppose you didn't get the knitting-needles?"

Now for the first time Elizabeth remembered

the errand that had taken her to Hyacinth Hill.

"I wonder if Louis will tell Miss Hyacinth?" she exclaimed, suddenly smitten with the terrible thought that perhaps she could not go to Hyacinth Hill any more.

"And darest thou then
To beard the lion in his den,
The Douglas in his hall?
And thinkest thou hence unscathed to go?
No, by St. Bride of Bothwell, no!"

Billy quoted with tremendous emphasis.

The days that followed were not exactly happy for Elizabeth. After her excitement cooled she began to regret what she had done, though she persisted in the belief that she had said only what was true. The worst of it was the uncertainty as to how Miss Hyacinth felt toward her. And William, tickled with what he considered the appropriateness of the lines, was forever teasingly repeating, "'And darest thou then—?'"

"I can't take it back, but I can say I am sorry I said it," was the conclusion at which she finally arrived.

Miss Gilderoy often dropped in at the min-

ister's on her way from town; it was a pleasant resting-place, and Miss Una gave her many valuable housekeeping hints. When almost a week passed without her appearance, Elizabeth felt certain she must be the cause.

When Sunday came, Miss Hyacinth sat in her usual place across the aisle in church; but Elizabeth was afraid to look in her direction, keeping her eyes instead upon Mrs. Thomas McLean, a person she did not in the least admire. Mainie always took particular notice of her in a good-natured, gushing manner that displeased Elizabeth's fastidious taste as much as her flyaway finery.

After service, waiting at the door for Miss Una who had stopped to discuss some church matters, Elizabeth became aware of an arm about her shoulders, and Miss Gilderoy's voice asked, "Where have you been this long time, little girl?"

The color rushed to her face, and for a moment she had not a word to say. Could it be that Miss Hyacinth did not know, after all?

"Louis told me to say to you, that he should like to see you. Can't you come up to-morrow afternoon?"

This was still more surprising. "I—guess I can," Elizabeth stammered.

"I have no idea what he wants," Hyacinth said. "He called to me just as I was leaving.—Thank you, Miss Una, he has seemed better the last few days, though the weather has been trying."

Elizabeth did not enjoy the idea of facing Louis, but she could not refuse his request. She felt it had not been quite fair to run away as she did without giving him a chance to reply, and if he were going to take his revenge now, she must let him have it. At least Miss Hyacinth was still fond of her.

"So you are going again to beard the Douglas in his den, are you?" said William, mockingly, when she came down with her hat on the next afternoon. "I'll be up after a while to see how you are getting on."

"I don't need your assistance, thank you," Elizabeth replied loftily; but she was not at all sorry when Miss Una announced that she was going up to see Hyacinth about the Christmas entertainment for the Sunday-school.

"And thinkest thou hence unscathed to go?"

rang in her ears as they walked up the hill. Her face was very grave.

Hyacinth met them at the door. "Louis is in the dining room, Elizabeth," she said, and at once carried Miss Una off to the sitting room.

Rather timidly Elizabeth entered the half-open door, and paused. Louis, who sat beside one of the windows, turned and held out his hand. "Well, Elizabeth," he said.

His handsome, boyish face was without the disfiguring frown to-day, and his smile was like Hyacinth's. Elizabeth, whose sympathies were always ready, felt the appeal of his helplessness. She advanced slowly.

"I was afraid you had decided to cut my acquaintance altogether," Louis went on. "There is something I want to say to you, and as I can't get to you, I had to ask you to come here."

Elizabeth stood beside him, one hand on the back of a chair. "I want to tell you that I am sorry for some of the things I said. I am afraid it wasn't exactly fair."

"When people are angry they are apt to say



" 'WHY, ELIZABETH, YOU AREN'T CRYING?' "

things they do not mean. I did to Hyacinth that day, but I am not going to excuse myself. I had no right to speak as I did. I have been thinking over what you said, and I suppose it is true—a good deal of it. I never used to be a coward, but perhaps I am one now.—It's awfully hard, you know, to be helpless when there is so much I want to do."

"I know it is. I hadn't any right—it wasn't fair," Elizabeth cried, and tears rose to her eyes.

"I suppose, as you said, it might be worse, and they say sometime I shall be better.—I don't know, at any rate —"

Elizabeth, resting her folded arms on the chair back, hid her face on them.

"Why, Elizabeth, you aren't crying? There is nothing to cry about. I don't mind, really. You told the truth. I ought to thank you. I do, only it hurt a little to be called a coward."

"I am so sorry," Elizabeth faltered, her eyes still hidden.

"Sorry for what?"

"That you can't walk, and that I said you were a coward. I—won't you forgive me?"

Louis leaned forward and gently pulled one

of her hands away. "Look at me, Elizabeth. It isn't worth crying about. You were right, and I am really obliged to you. I haven't anything to forgive, but I should like to be friends. Will you? That is, if you think it worth while, with such a worthless fellow as I."

Elizabeth lifted her head and smiled through her tears. "Of course I want to be friends. I like you very much, Louis. I don't think you are a coward—not now. If I were in your place, I should be dreadful, I know. Billy says I have never had anything much the matter with me, so I can't understand."

They clasped hands warmly, and Elizabeth sat down and wiped her eyes.

"I told Hyacinth I was sorry," Louis said. "She is awfully good to me, but somehow it is the people who are the best to you that you flare out at."

"I know Billy is dreadfully cross to me sometimes, and I am to him."

"I don't believe you are dreadfully cross ever," Louis said.

"Yes, I am, I should think you would know it," Elizabeth laughed. "I am not good at all.

I read story-books instead of studying my lessons sometimes, and then I have to learn so many lines of poetry as a punishment."

"There is nobody to punish me, and sometimes when I mean to be specially decent I am worse than ever," Louis sighed. "At times the days are never ending."

When Hyacinth came to tell Elizabeth that Miss Una was ready to go, she found them talking together like old friends, and Louis with a brighter face than he had worn since his accident.

"It is settled, then?" he said with a smile, as Elizabeth rose.

"Yes, indeed, of course it is," she responded warmly.

"What are you and Louis settling?" Hyacinth asked, as they left the room together.

"Oh, just that we are going to be friends," said Elizabeth.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

THE MAGIC TRUNK

“**I** SHOULD like to go about giving people exactly what they want at Christmas,” Miss Una remarked. “I mean people who are poor.”

Mrs. Parton nodded her head emphatically. “I know what you mean,” she said. “People with money can gratify their whims once in a while, and who does not have foolish desires now and then? There is something tragic about never having anything you do not actually need.”

“It never occurred to me before,” said Hyacinth. “Do let me fill your cup, Miss Unadilla. You have had such a cold drive.”

“Thank you, Hyacinth, your tea is delicious. I can’t resist.” Miss Una smiled on her pretty hostess.

She and Mrs. Parton had driven out a mile

beyond Hyacinth Hill to inquire for a sick child, and on their return had stopped to kill two birds, as her companion expressed it,—get warm and make a call. Nor were they the only persons who found the north wind unexpectedly cold this afternoon. Dr. Milward, out for his constitutional, was presently ushered into the sitting room.

“I couldn’t pass you by a day like this, Hyacinth,” he said.

“This ill wind has blown me a great deal of good; I am grateful to it,” Hyacinth responded, pushing an arm-chair nearer the fire. “You are just in time for a cup of tea, Dr. Milward.”

“Here come some other storm-tossed travellers,” Mrs. Parton exclaimed, pointing toward the window. “Your boarders, Miss Una, and my Belle and Katherine Roberts.”

The young persons coming up the drive did not seem to mind the wind. The keen air that chilled older blood stirred their pulses and made their faces glow.

“May we come in, Miss Hyacinth?—Oh, you have company!” Belle paused at the door.

“Come in, of course. I am delighted to see

you. This is a strictly informal tea drinking," Hyacinth replied.

"You have met us before," added Mrs. Parton.

"Why, it is mother," laughed Belle, as she entered followed by the others. "I thought you were having a party."

"I am—the nicest sort," Hyacinth answered, greeting her visitors and pouring more tea.

"To go back to what we were talking about when Cousin Charles came in," Miss Una began after the newcomers had subsided, the girls on the divan in the chimney-corner, William making himself useful beside Hyacinth at the tea-table; "what do you suppose old Mrs. Bailey wants for a Christmas gift? She hasn't left her room for a year, you know, and never will again."

"An umbrella," suggested Belle.

"Or an automobile," added Billy.

"Neither of those, but it is just as funny. I asked her to tell me something she would like, and she could think of nothing but a trunk."

"I don't believe she ever travelled fifty miles from Friendship in her life," said Mrs. Parton.

"Who is she?" Hyacinth asked. "Is she poor?"

"She is a widow — has always been one so far as I know — and she supported herself by sewing till her hands became crippled with rheumatism," Mrs. Parton explained. "Her niece, Miss Julia, who is clerk in Mr. Warren's store, takes care of her; but they have a struggling time, and occasionally have to be helped a little. She is a good soul, and I for one should like to give her a trunk if it would make her any happier."

"Though groceries would seem more sensible," Miss Una added. "There is something rather pathetic about it. As Mrs. Parton said, it seems tragic never to have anything you do not actually need." Hyacinth looked thoughtfully into her cup. Feeling the pinch of a narrow income herself, her heart was tender toward those whose trials were of the same sort.

Dr. Milward smiled. "Some people would say she was fortunate to have what she needs, but then it is not easy to know a person's real needs. 'Life is more than meat.'"

While the talk was going on Elizabeth slipped

across the hall to the dining room to see Louis. Since the day of their compact she had become his firm friend and staunch defender, and Louis was making a real fight against depression and despair, losing many battles, indeed, but not giving up. He still shrank from meeting people and if possible always made his escape from the sitting room when there were callers.

"How are you, Betsy?" he said, laying down his book. "What is all that chattering about?"

Elizabeth told him of old Mrs. Bailey and her funny wish.

"Poor old lady, she is as badly off as I am, isn't she?" was Louis's comment.

"If you could see where she lives, you would think she was worse off. It is a queer little house with hardly any paint left on it, and her room has a rag carpet and a stove. I went to see her with Miss Una once. I don't think you'd like it, Louis.—But she seemed quite cheerful."

"Moral," said Louis.

"Now, Louis, please—you know I did not mean that. Besides, you are quite cheerful yourself lately."

Louis shook his head. "Not much to brag of, Betsy. I believe I'd rather like to give the old lady a trunk."

Not long after this Elizabeth went one afternoon to ask for Mrs. Bailey and take her a glass of jelly, Miss Unadilla, who regarded the old woman as her special charge, being housed with a cold. Elizabeth enjoyed her errand; it gave her a new sense of usefulness and independence.

Mrs. Bailey, who spent the greater part of the day alone, was most pleased to have company. "You're the little girl that's stayin' up at the minister's, ain't you?" she said, and nothing would do but her caller must sit down and submit to be catechised.

Elizabeth did not resent her questions as she did Miss Martha's, so she drew up a chair and replied to them all, good-naturedly.

Mrs. Bailey, when she was not confined to her bed, always sat by the window, where she could look out on the street with a pair of faded blue eyes that in spite of age and rheumatism still found life interesting.

"It's real nice for you and your brother to

be up there," she continued. "Miss Martha Doane says his eyes are bad. Where's your pa and ma?"

"Father is in Washington, and mother is in France with my sister."

"France. — That's pretty fur off, ain't it? At school we used to say France looked like a teapot and Italy like a boot. Seems as if it had kind of fixed 'em in my mind. Do you study geography?"

"I have finished geography," Elizabeth said.

"You don't say? Learnin' comes easy to some. I always liked geography, and I used to say I was goin' to travel some day; but the nearest I ever come to it is livin' here on the road to the depot. The depot is just down there a little piece, you know." Mrs. Bailey pointed over her shoulder.

"'Most everybody that goes away passes here, and when I see 'em with their travellin' bags and the expressman with the trunks, seems like I know how it feels to be a-goin' somewhere myself." There was a happy light in the faded eyes; Elizabeth smiled sympathetically.

"Julia got me a time-table," Mrs. Bailey went

on. "She knows the ticket man over to the depot — an' it's real interestin'."

To Elizabeth, who loved to pretend, this all had a familiar sound, and suggested the Gray Friar's idea. So she told Mrs. Bailey about it; how in one sense everybody was a traveller; and how the paths ran in every direction, crossing and recrossing as the roads do on a railway map.

Her listener nodded her head in eager appreciation. "Seems like there's a heap of comfort to be got out of makin' believe. Julia, now, thinks it's all foolishness; but mercy me, it's half the pleasure I've had. And so accordin' to that I am a-travellin' after all. Well, well! Looks like I never got very fur along, but I might have gone further and fared worse, as they say. It all sounds real pretty. That about the city, too; but dearie me, what would a poor old woman like me want with a whole city, just a little house is enough."

"That about the city is out of the Bible," Elizabeth explained, "and it stands for the thing that belongs to you, that you are going to find some day." It was not easy to make it clear.

Mrs. Bailey nodded. "It is a pretty idea," she said.

Elizabeth rose. "I must go now."

"Come and see me again, dearie, and tell me more about travellin'. If you was old and crippled, you'd be glad to have a spry little girl come to see you."

Elizabeth laughed. "I'll come again, Mrs. Bailey. You see our paths have crossed."

"So they have — it's a real nice idea. Thank Miss Una for the jelly. Folks is mighty kind to this old traveller."

Elizabeth told Louis about her visit to Mrs. Bailey. "I know now why she wants a trunk — it is to help her make believe she is travelling."

She had a graphic way of telling things, and her picture of the old woman at the window, watching people pass on their way to the station, impressed Louis and aroused his sympathy. He remembered a steamer trunk bought a few weeks before his accident and never used, and Ranney was sent to the storeroom in search of it.

He found it and brought it down, and Louis and Elizabeth decided it would do finely. It had received a few scratches on the journey to Friend-

ship, but these Louis said could be touched with a little varnish, and with her initials painted on one end it would be as good as new. Hyacinth entering the sitting room found Elizabeth on the floor beside the trunk, and Louis looking very animated as they decided these important details.

“Have her full name on it by all means,” said Hyacinth. “I know she will like that best.” If her brother had been proposing to give away her great-grandmother’s linen chest, she would hardly have demurred, seeing him so bright.

There must have been a bit of magic about that trunk, for through Louis’s interest in it several steps were taken away from the morbid depression that was spoiling his life.

Although he and Elizabeth had become firm friends, and he did not object to seeing William, or even Belle Parton once in a while, Hyacinth could never get him into the sitting room on the afternoons when her friends dropped in for tea.

Friendship was finding out how pleasant it was at Hyacinth Hill, and what a charming hostess Miss Gilderoy made. Everybody was sorry for

her, used as she was to city life, now tied down to a quiet country place with a fretful invalid. It was only charitable to be friendly and not count visits. Having gone once from some such unselfish motive, they went again to enjoy themselves; so the custom grew of looking in at Hyacinth Hill on Saturday afternoons.

It was on one of these occasions that Elizabeth stood beside Louis's chair and in her most coaxing manner asked, "Won't you do something for me, Louis?"

"No, Betsy, I don't think I will."

"Then you are not kind—you don't like me!"

"Oh, Betsy, what a wheedler! I am kind and I like you, but I am not going into the drawing-room to be stared at like a tame bear."

"I don't think you are very tame," Elizabeth remarked gravely.

"But I am the bear all right, I suppose." Louis smiled at her. "You know people do stare, or they try not to, which is just as bad, and I don't propose to make a Roman holiday."

"That is a very disagreeable thing to say. There are only Cousin Charles and Belle and Mrs. Whittredge, and they are talking about the

trunk, — about putting things in it for Christmas. Besides — ”

“ Well? ”

“ You’ll say it is preaching. ”

“ I call things by their right names, Betsy; but when have I ever objected to your sermons? ”

“ You said, ” Elizabeth spoke slowly, “ you wished there was something you could do for Miss Hyacinth to make up for all she does for you, and she’d rather — ”

“ Botheration! I wish I had held my tongue. Did Hyacinth send you? ”

“ Louis, you know she didn’t, but — ”

“ You needn’t rub it in, ” Louis exclaimed rather fiercely. “ Call Ranney for me, please. ”

Elizabeth disappeared, pausing in the hall an instant to clap her hands silently.

Louis found the ordeal not so terrible after all. Ranney rolled him in so quickly and quietly the group around the tea-table hardly knew he was there till he was safe in his favorite corner, and Elizabeth had joined him, full of pride and delight. Nobody stared, and the flush of pleasure on Hyacinth’s face would have made up for it if they had.

Mrs. Allan Whittredge, with her sweet face and soft voice, crossed the room and sat beside him, expressing in the simplest way her pleasure at seeing him. Then Mr. Whittredge came in with Colonel Parton, and while they were having tea, Belle and Dr. Milward came over to Louis's corner, and the conversation turned to Mrs. Bailey's trunk, which stood all ready to be delivered, in the hall. They grew merry over the discussion of what to put in it, and from this drifted into Christmas matters in general, the home coming of the college boys, and the visit of Rosalind Whittredge; and through it all Louis was so like his old engaging self, except for his helplessness, that Hyacinth could hardly keep the tears from her eyes.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

HOLLY WREATHS

“**B**ETSY, come on! We are going down to trim the church; Miss Hyacinth is waiting.”

Elizabeth sat on her foot in one corner of the divan with Cyrus beside her, an open book in her lap. She was repeating something under her breath, keeping time with a small fist that beat the cushions rhythmically.

“Yes, Billy, I’ll come in a moment; but don’t wait, I’ll overtake you. I have just four lines to learn.”

The holiday season was hard on Elizabeth. She could not keep her thoughts on her lessons. Always confident that there was plenty of time for everything, she frequently awoke to discover that something had been crowded out, the something usually being a lesson.

The interest of the moment absorbed her, and

to counteract this, Dr. Milward had begun to exact, as a penalty for carelessly prepared lessons, so many lines of poetry, committed to memory. The children of the present day learned too little poetry, he said, and it was an economic device thus to turn punishment to account.

Elizabeth did not mind very much. The poem chosen for her was "The Lady of the Lake," and she was quite alive to the romantic charm of its spirited, flowing metre.

"For still the burden of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's match-
less eye,"

she repeated as she put on her coat and hat.

William and Miss Gilderoy had reached Main Street before she overtook them. Between them they carried a rod on which were hung a number of holly and pine wreaths.

"Cousin Charles doesn't like me to skip a bit. I began to learn just the interesting parts, but he made me go back," Elizabeth said, her mind still on poetry.

"You are skipping this minute," remarked Billy. "We'll make you go back if you don't look out."

"You are so very bright," Elizabeth exclaimed, quieting down to a more dignified pace. "There is a lot of it that is stupid description," she went on. "You might think Scotland was the only country in the world. I don't believe it at all."

"It is poetic license, I suppose," Hyacinth said gayly, drawing Betsy's hand within her arm.

"A lie without any sense," observed William.

"Why, Billy, what a thing to say! Walter Scott would tell a lie!"

"You said yourself you did not believe him. What is the difference?"

"I was more polite, anyway. Wasn't I, Miss Hyacinth?"

Miss Gilderoy was laughing. "Is Dr. Milward coming to help us?" she asked.

"I don't know," Elizabeth replied. "He had a visitor. I heard a man's voice talking in the study."

"'For still the burden of thy minstrelsy —'"

"Mercy on us, Betsy!" William cried.

"'Beauty's matchless eye,'" Elizabeth continued unabashed. "That is you, Miss Hyacinth."

"Thank you," said Hyacinth. "I was never the subject of minstrelsy so far as I know."

"If I were a minstrel —" William began.

"There is Belle," Hyacinth exclaimed, spoiling his gallant speech. "I wonder if she is going to help us."

It was two days before Christmas, and Hyacinth, who had offered to superintend the trimming of the little church, had pressed all her young friends into service. From being damp and chilly, it had turned suddenly colder, with a hint of snow in the air that promised Christmas weather. The joy of youth was in Hyacinth's veins to-day. Her face glowed, and her eyes might very well inspire Betsy's quotation.

Belle waved her muff in greeting and waited at the gate. "Rosalind and the boys came last night," she announced.

"I hope you engaged their services for me," Hyacinth said.

"I told them. I don't know where the boys are. Rosalind is at Miss Celia's. She will help. I am going to stop there."

They had just reached the gate of what had once been the Gilpin place, where the Allan Whittredges now lived, when the front door opened, letting out the sound of gay voices.

"There's Rosalind!" cried Belle. "And Jack and Maurice, too."

"I am going in for a moment to speak to Mrs. Whittredge," Hyacinth said, as that lady appeared on the porch with the others.

William and Elizabeth waited at the gate, Elizabeth rather anxious to see this wonderful Rosalind, but a little abashed by so many strangers.

"I can't go to the church this afternoon, Miss Gilderoy," Mrs. Whittredge was saying; "but these children will help you. This is my niece, Rosalind Whittredge. And have you met Mr. Parton and Mr. Roberts?"

The children were quite grown up, Elizabeth thought. "Anybody would know Jack, who had seen Belle," she whispered to Billy.

They all came down the walk in a merry, chattering bunch, and at the gate Belle introduced her friends. Rosalind was a tall, fair-haired girl, by no means so remarkable in appearance as Elizabeth had been led to expect; but a little later, when they walked side by side toward the church, Betsy was completely won. Rosalind's manner was so simple and friendly, her eyes so soft and deep.

"Belle wrote to me about you," she said; "I hope you like Friendship as much as I do."

Elizabeth dimpled and flushed, and replied, "I have heard a great deal about you, too, and I do like Friendship; but we haven't had so many interesting things happen to us."

Rosalind laughed. "I don't believe we thought it so very eventful at the time, it is more in looking back at it; but we did have fun that summer, didn't we, Maurice?" She turned to the tall young fellow at her other side.

Belle was helping William carry the wreaths, and Jack, who walked behind with Hyacinth, suddenly seized her end of the rod, slipped off a pine wreath, and popped it over Maurice's head, where it hung on his hat in a most absurd way.

"Mercy, Jack! it will prick him," Belle cried; but Maurice was equal to the occasion. If it pricked, he bore it unflinchingly.

"Thank you, Jack," he said, adjusting it around his neck, and walking calmly on, as if this novel decoration was quite customary.

The spirit of frolic was abroad, and no one

could doubt it was Christmas time who saw this gay party.

Rosalind presently looked back to ask, "What is Professor Whitney doing in Friendship? I saw him at the station this morning. I asked him if he was here for Christmas, but he said not — just for the day."

"I don't know him, who is he?" Jack inquired.

"Surely you have heard of him. He lectured at the university last winter. Father and Cousin Louis met him abroad several years ago, and they became great friends. I believe he isn't so very well known here in the East. I wondered if he could be lecturing in Friendship," Rosalind continued.

While the others were untwisting the ropes of cedar, and taking the holly out of the crate, Elizabeth went with Miss Hyacinth to the old graveyard back of the church, with the wreaths they had brought.

"My people are buried here," Hyacinth explained, "and I thought I'd like to put some holly on the graves this year."

Though now little used, the place was well

cared for, and in summer a peaceful, pensive beauty hung about the time-stained urns and ivy-covered mounds, shaded by weeping willows and cypress trees; but to-day it was bleak and melancholy. The evergreens looked black against the gray sky, the bare branches of the willows swayed drearily in the wind, and the ivy was dull and brown.

Elizabeth shivered. "How lonely it is," she said, as they laid their wreaths on the graves, where the holly berries shone out, warm and red.

"Yes, and cold, too. We must hurry back," Hyacinth replied.

"Whose grave is that under the cedar?" Elizabeth pointed to a mound almost hidden. The low headstone was stained by the dripping of the rain from the tree's branches.

"I don't know," Miss Gilderoy said. "I have an impression that some relative of Aunt Gilderoy's is buried there. I must ask Dr. Milward. There are only the initials on the stone."

"I wish we had some holly for it. Whoever it belongs to will feel left out," Elizabeth said.

Her companion smiled. "I hope not. Per-

haps we may find another wreath that is not needed in the church."

The matter passed entirely out of Hyacinth's mind, however, in her task of directing the merry decorators. From the first moment these young people were all her loyal slaves, vying with each other in carrying out her wishes, and she forgot her burdens and was as light-hearted as any of them.

Elizabeth quietly dropped a holly wreath behind one of the choir seats. If it were needed, she would bring it out, if not, she would have it for the unknown grave.

The work went forward successfully. By and by Mr. Allan Whittredge and his sister, Miss Genevieve, came in.

"That is our greatest beauty," Belle whispered.

"She is beautiful, but she isn't sweet like Miss Hyacinth," was Elizabeth's verdict, as she watched the two talking together.

Everything was done now, and the janitor had begun cleaning up. Her wreath was not needed, so with a word to Hyacinth, Elizabeth ran off with it. The afternoon was nearly over, and it

was beginning to snow as she hurried down the path, humming a little tune, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left. It was more dreary than ever now she was by herself, and she felt sorry she had not asked Belle or Billy to come with her.

She crossed the grass and, stooping, pushed aside the branches of the tree, then, the better to arrange her wreath, she knelt.

"I am afraid the ground is very damp," a voice close by remarked.

Springing to her feet, Elizabeth faced the Gray Friar, looking bigger than ever in his heavy gray overcoat.

"I didn't mean to startle you," he said, with his friendly smile.

"I was a little frightened," she acknowledged. "It is so lonely here; but I am very glad to see you. I was wondering if you were ever coming again. Where did you come from?"

"Just now, do you mean? You passed me. I had stepped from the path to look at an old stone."

Elizabeth explained her errand. "Of course," she said, "I don't suppose whoever it is knows,

but you can't be sure, and it seemed too bad to leave anybody out at Christmas. Don't you think so?"

"A good many people are left out, I'm afraid," said the Gray Friar.

This did not sound like the cheerful friend of past meetings. Elizabeth looked at him in surprise. "Do you mean poor people?"

"Or homeless tramps, like me."

Elizabeth looked him up and down. "You are a funny sort of tramp," she said.

"There are many varieties."

"Do you mean you haven't any home? I should think you could have one if you wanted it."

"There are some things that can't be had for the wanting."

"I suppose you mean that it takes people to make a home," Elizabeth said seriously.

"It is not worth looking so grave about. After all, I'm quite used to it." The Gray Friar smiled reassuringly. "How are you getting on here in Friendship?"

"Very well, indeed. We like it, Billy and I. And we know the 'lady of the manor.' You remember that was what you called her?"

"Elizabeth — Betsy! where are you?" It was Hyacinth's voice, and then appeared Hyacinth herself, coming toward them, carrying her muff under one arm as she fastened her glove, her cheeks a glorious rose against her chinchilla collar.

"Miss Hyacinth, here's the Gray Friar!"

Miss Gilderoy and the stranger bowed ceremoniously to each other. "The weather has changed," Hyacinth remarked with gravity.

"Has it?" said the Gray Friar. "It still seems pleasant."

"You are perhaps one of those fortunate persons who can perceive silver linings in clouds," Hyacinth spoke lightly, taking Elizabeth's hand. "Come, Betsy dear, it is growing late, we must say good night."

Elizabeth was reluctant to leave. She would have liked a long conversation with the Gray Friar. "I hope you will come to Friendship soon again," she said.

"I shall see you again in a few weeks. In the meantime I wish you a merry Christmas. Good-bye."

"Merry Christmas, and good-bye," Elizabeth echoed, as Hyacinth drew her away.

The Gray Friar watched them till they were out of sight, then he turned to the grave beneath the cedar and stooping broke off a bit of holly from Elizabeth's wreath.

"I had a visit to-day from the person you call the Gray Friar," said Dr. Milward at the dinner table, as calmly as if it were an everyday matter.

"Really, Cousin Charles? And did you find out his name?" cried Elizabeth, and William put down his knife and fork and looked interested.

Dr. Milward smiled. "I believe his card is on the study table. He sent it in. His name is Whitney — Martin Whitney."

"Martin Whitney," Elizabeth repeated. "And who is he, Cousin Charles, and what does he do?"

"He is a doctor of pedagogics."

"What a dreadful word!" Elizabeth exclaimed.

"No wonder he wanted to keep it quiet," William added.

"Pedagogics," the minister explained, "is the science of teaching."

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

IN HOLIDAY TIME

FRIENDSHIP was gay beyond anything that had been known for years. The visit of Rosalind Whittredge and the return of the college boys, on their first holiday, were made the occasion of much festivity. There was the Christmas party given by the Allan Whittredges in their spacious home, once known as the Gilpin place, to which everybody of any consequence was asked. There were teas, and luncheons and dinners besides, and skating parties, for the weather continued cold.

The enjoyment of these affairs was by no means confined to the participants. It is doubtful if any one got more pleasure from the gayety than Mrs. Bailey in her chair by the window. She heard all about it from her niece, Miss Julia, who was clerk in Mr. Warren's store, and thus in the way of getting the news.

Miss Martha Doane, too, who lived across the street, often ran in in the evening to exchange gossip with Miss Julia.

Mrs. Bailey was as happy as a king, to use her own words, over her Christmas gift. The magic trunk of the fairy tale could hardly have brought more happiness to its owner. She proudly exhibited it to everybody who came in.

“Seems as if I’d always wanted a trunk,” she said. “I ain’t ever been anywheres — that is, to call it a journey, but I can sort of feel how it would be if I was packin’ up to go travellin’. It’s real handy to hold things, too, and my name’s on it. That poor young man up at Hyacinth Hill, he sent it to me, and he put the letters on it himself. That little girl at the minister’s, she told me how we was all going on a journey, sort of pretend like, you know, and the minister he read to me about what Jacob said to the king of Egypt, — that the years of his pilgrimage had been few and evil. Well, mine ain’t been so few or so evil. I have got a sight of comfort lookin’ on at things and makin’ out like I’m livin’ in it all.”

Mrs. Bailey was not indifferent to the contents of her trunk; the warm flannels and other

comforts were most acceptable, but they were secondary.

"Aunt Nancy was feeling right despondent before Christmas," Miss Julia said apologetically; "but that trunk has cheered her up wonderful. It seems kind of foolish her wantin' it, still I'm real glad she's got it."

Miss Martha Doane listened to this with pursed-up lips. She made no remark, but later she confided to Mrs. Molesworth her opinion of people who hadn't any more practical sense than to give a trunk to an old woman who was as good as bedridden.

One thing that interested Mrs. Bailey was the visit of Senator Sayre. Fortunately for her he arrived in the daytime, so that she saw him pass, walking up from the station between his son and daughter. Elizabeth looked up with a smile and nod, and the senator lifted his hat. Mrs. Bailey glowed with pride whenever she thought of it.

Dr. Milward gave a dinner in Mr. Sayre's honor, on which occasion Miss Martha helped Miss Unadilla behind the scenes, so Mrs. Bailey heard how the table was set and what they had

to eat, and even something of the conversation.

Miss Julia was able to describe a number of the dresses worn at the Whittredge party. She had her information from Mrs. Pierce, who was there. According to this lady the general opinion seemed to be that so far as beauty and grace went, Miss Genevieve Whittredge had a rival in Miss Gilderoy.

The Arden Foresters, who were the cause of much of the gayety, enjoyed themselves to the top of their bent. They were always together, and never appeared in public without their oak-leaf pins. Although somewhat younger, the Sayres, as Belle's friends, were included in the merry-making.

Mr. Sayre came to Friendship for two days and remained a week. The simple home life at the minister's, Miss Unadilla's old-fashioned hospitality, and the wholesome gayety of the village carried him back to his boyhood. Here he found the opportunity to become really acquainted with the son and daughter who, while he had been absorbed in his profession, had grown almost out of his knowledge. Be-

yond assuring himself of their health and happiness, he had had little to do with his younger children, and they regarded him chiefly as a court of last appeal, whose decisions stood, though made in the face of much opposition, as in the matter of their being sent to Friendship.

The circumstances which had broken up their family life for the time had, in one sense, drawn them nearer to each other. Among strangers, however kind, ties of blood take on a new value. This boy and girl were a pair to be proud of, Mr. Sayre told himself. He had missed something in not winning their friendship long ago.

On their part William and Elizabeth were surprised to find their father so good a comrade, interested in all that interested them, and with a really intelligent appreciation for some of their favorite books.

Perhaps no one thing pleased Mr. Sayre more than the cake Betsy made for him. When he was a boy, he said, he always thought his mother looked prettiest when, in a big white apron, she stirred up something good, and let him scrape the bowl.

"Why, father, you never told us about those times," Elizabeth said. "Was that the grandmother I am named for? I'll make you another cake, and let you scrape the bowl."

In this week Miss Una and Mr. Sayre became good friends, and his appreciation of what she was doing for the children brought a pretty glow of gratification to her face. Since Thomas was a little boy, more than thirty years ago, Miss Una had not enjoyed the Christmas holidays so much. She had actually been induced to hang up her stocking on Christmas eve, and Dr. Milward hazarded a guess that she had written a letter to Santa Claus besides. This Miss Una denied indignantly, and then laughed at her own earnestness, which undoubtedly sprang from a consciousness of other childish performances.

Among other events that week was Saturday afternoon at Hyacinth Hill. Elizabeth and William helped Hyacinth with her decorations, while Louis rolled his chair back and forth, criticising and making suggestions with as lively an interest as anybody.

"This would be a jolly place if only we had the money to keep it," he remarked, when all

was done, and the pretty old house fragrant with the odor of pine, and festive with holly and mistletoe.

"With an L thrown out on the east side," he went on, "it could be made large enough for a very respectable house party."

"He is actually beginning to appreciate Hyacinth Hill," said his sister, patting his shoulder.

A cloud swept over Louis's face. "It is all if—if—" he sighed—"if we had the money, and if I were not a dead weight. I wonder what that fellow is doing with Aunt Gilderoy's fortune?"

The tide of sociability being just then at its height, everybody came to Hyacinth Hill. The mingling of young and old on occasions like this was one of the pleasant features of Friendship.

Belle brought her friends, and wherever that party appeared merriment was certain to prevail. Louis, who was hungry for college news and talk, enjoyed the boys greatly after the first moments of unhappy self-consciousness had passed. Jack Parton's nonsense was a thing to brighten the deepest gloom, and the fun that went on around Louis's chair knew scarcely a pause. Hyacinth,

busy with her other guests, could not keep her eyes from that side of the room.

When other people were beginning to think of leaving, Mrs. Lawrence rustled in. "I am so pleased," she began, after greeting her hostess; "I have a most delightful piece of news." Everybody within hearing was included in her glance.

"Arrangements have been completed to-day for a course of lectures from Professor Whitney," she continued. "I am simply so full of it I must talk about it. Dr. Milward and Colonel Parton have been my allies, and Mrs. Graham, who realizes the advantage to her older pupils. I do hope we shall be supported. It is such an opportunity for Friendship. He is a perfectly delightful speaker."

"Professor Whitney? That is Rosalind's friend," some one said.

"I do believe it is the Gray Friar," exclaimed Elizabeth, who stood beside Hyacinth.

"Why do you think so?" Miss Gilderoy asked in surprise.

"Because that is his name. I forgot to tell you that he came to see Cousin Charles the very day

we met him; and don't you remember, he said he would be back again soon."

"I hope it is the Gray Friar," Elizabeth remarked, as she walked home between her father and brother, "for then I shall have a chance to ask him a lot of questions."

"Are you sure he will wish to answer them?" her father asked, squeezing the hand he held.

Elizabeth laughed. "He doesn't mind questions. I want to know why he called himself a tramp."

"And why he wanted to be a doctor of — what is that horrible word?" added Billy.

"Then I am to write to mother that you are happy in Friendship and do not wish to make any change at present," Mr. Sayre said. "She charged me to be sure you were happy."

"I'm happy — ever so happy. Aren't you, Billy?" said Elizabeth.

"I like it all right enough," William replied, with a studied lack of enthusiasm.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

LOUIS'S SECRET

“**I**F I show you something, Elizabeth, you’ll promise not to tell?”

“Of course.”

“I tell you for two reasons; first because you will be interested, and second because you can help me. Not another soul knows anything about it.”

On Louis’s lap lay a large portfolio which he fingered nervously as he spoke. Elizabeth sat on a footstool with her arms folded on her knees, her eyes fixed upon him expectantly.

“You see,” he continued, “I have been thinking seriously about things. They may say what they please, I know I shall never walk.”

“But, Louis, if you just wouldn’t say that. The doctor thought you had improved, and Cousin Charles says the things you expect are very likely to happen.”

“That is bosh, if you will excuse me for saying so. It is the unexpected that happens. At any rate, that is how I feel about it, and I have been trying to think what I could do so as not to go on being nothing but a burden. I have always thought it would be rather nice to be an illustrator, and I know I have some talent. I used to do the illustrations for our college paper, so I have decided to try my luck in a small way. I see so many nonsense rhymes and things of that sort in the magazines, and it seems to me I can do quite as well.”

Louis opened the portfolio and Elizabeth drew nearer. In her opinion the drawings he displayed and the verses they were intended to adorn were marvels of cleverness.

“Louis, they are splendid!” she cried, clapping her hands.

“If only the magazines will think so,” Louis said, much gratified. “There are so many people doing this sort of thing.”

“But these are so delightfully funny, especially the little girl who wouldn’t use a thimble. She looks like me.” Elizabeth studied it with her head on one side.

"You inspired me. Indeed, in a way you are responsible for it all, Betsy. You stirred me up in the first place. I have been thinking, too, that almost everybody who does anything worth while does it in the face of some hindrance, and I don't want to be a coward — although I am half the time," Louis ended despondently.

"Louis — indeed you are not."

"Yes, I am. I was horribly cross to Hyacinth this morning. Something reminded me of a man who used to sit in a wheeled chair near the station at home, and sell pencils and shoe-strings, and I began to wonder if that might not be what fate had in store for me."

"But, Louis, he must have been very poor," Elizabeth objected, finding it difficult to think of this handsome youth, with the costly rug over his knees, in such a situation.

"I assure you we are poor, Betsy. There is no knowing what we may come to. I can see Hyacinth is worried about expenses, though she says nothing."

"If only Madam Gilderoy had left you some money."

"Hyacinth says she had a right to do as she

pleased, and so she had, I suppose; but it was all Gilderoy money."

"Did you ever see the man she left it to?"

"Once, but I didn't notice him much. He was a poor country boy, a cousin of my aunt's, whom she picked up and educated, and then in some way he gained an influence over her, and made her think he would do great things with her money. I have no doubt he'll manage to spend it."

"I should think he would give up part of it to you," said Elizabeth.

"You don't think I'd accept it, do you, Betsy? No, indeed. I don't propose to live on that man's charity," said Louis. "Aunt Gilderoy didn't like me," he continued. "I went in too much for athletics and other things. She said I spent too much money, which was not her affair, and I let her see I thought so. I might have hoodwinked her if I had chosen, but I am not a hypocrite."

Elizabeth was deeply sympathetic. Louis possessed in a great degree the gift of drawing people to him, and in the guise of a martyr setting to work in the face of his own ill health

and his aunt's injustice he would have won a harder heart than hers. It was true, he was not a hypocrite. He had had a real awakening to the fact that he was still a responsible being; he honestly wished to be of some account. But with the recovery of his spirits the old love of admiration had returned, and he enjoyed the self he saw reflected in Betsy's blue eyes. Her ardent appreciation was very pleasant.

She eagerly agreed to mail the drawings and verses for him—a matter Louis was not willing to trust to Ranney and which he wished to keep secret from his sister.

“I am going to depend on you for ideas, too, Betsy. You are a clever little person,” Louis said, as he wrapped them up and explained about the return postage which must go inside.

Greatly flattered by being chosen as confidante, Elizabeth carried off the package. She felt that her influence over Louis was a rather fine thing. She had overheard Dr. Milward refer to her laughingly as an instrument in the hands of Providence to arouse him, and it pleased her. Before she reached the post-office Louis had become in her imagination a success-

ful illustrator, and was telling his friends, "I owe it all to Elizabeth."

She was so absorbed she forgot to look up at Mrs. Bailey's window, greatly to the old lady's disappointment, for one of her amusements was keeping count of the number of bows she received in the course of a day.

At the post-office the weighing of the package demanded her attention, the enclosing of the stamps and the tying it up securely took a long time. Elizabeth was surprised to find it almost dark when she was on the street again. She did not feel at all comfortable. Miss Una would not like it, and besides she had promised to be at home long before this. It was a great relief to come suddenly upon William as she turned a corner. He and Belle Parton were talking together in front of the drug store.

"Why, Elizabeth Sayre, I have been looking everywhere for you. Where have you been?"

Betsy rebelled against her brother's tone of authority. She pursed up her lips. "Never mind," she said.

"Another time I shall not trouble myself to look for you," cried William, indignantly.

"I didn't ask you to. I had something to attend to, and it took longer than I thought it would, but I can take care of myself."

"We'll see what father says about your running around town alone at night."

"Don't quarrel, children," Belle admonished them gayly. "Come into the drug store with me, then we can walk out together. I believe I have forgotten what I came for," she added, as they entered the shop. "It is something to put on father's chest. He has a dreadful cold."

"I wonder if it is what Miss Una used," said Elizabeth. "Don't you remember, Billy?—such a funny name. It made me think of 'Flow gently, sweet Afton.'"

Belle laughed, then frowned thoughtfully. "Flow," she repeated, "it does seem to suggest it. Mr. Brown, do you know of anything that sounds like 'Flow gently, sweet Afton'? It is for father's chest."

The druggist considered. "For external application, you say? There is something that is used a good deal of late, called antiphlogistine."

"That's it," cried Belle. "I shall tell father your

name for it, Betsy. That is his favorite tune," she added, as the druggist went off laughing.

For the rest of the way home, after they left Belle at her gate, William preserved a dignified silence, making no response to Elizabeth's attempts at conversation.

"I don't see what makes you so disagreeable, Billy," she said at last. "I honestly had something to do that was important. If you knew, you would think so, too."

No reply.

A sudden recollection came to her. "There, I forgot all about our history lesson, but I guess we'll have time before dinner."

There was not time, however, it turned out, and instead of a delightful evening with Miss Unadilla over "The Talisman," the two hours before bedtime had to be given to lessons. It was very provoking, but Elizabeth did not think she ought to be blamed for it. To be sure, she had forgotten her promise to be at home by four o'clock, but then she had been helping Louis. Billy would have to get over his ill humor.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

A QUESTION OF TIME

MATTERS were not going well with Elizabeth. It seemed to her there was something wrong with the world; certainly there was not time enough.

"Haven't you all the time there is?" Dr. Milward asked, when she excused herself for not having her Latin lesson with this very old plea.

"Not for Latin, Cousin Charles," she said, laughing rather shamefacedly.

"Perhaps you find there are more important things than an education."

Elizabeth twisted her shoulders uneasily. The minister's calm gaze was disconcerting.

"You had time to go up to Hyacinth Hill yesterday," William volunteered, quite superfluously.

"I took Rags to Louis. He wanted to draw

him, and he was so funny I forgot to look at the clock." Rags was Belle's Skye terrier. "I thought it was right to help Louis," she added lamely.

"A case of robbing Peter to pay Paul, I see," was Dr. Milward's comment.

It made Elizabeth unhappy to be found fault with, all the more because of the complacent satisfaction she had been feeling in sharing Louis's secret and helping him. Evidently Cousin Charles was not impressed with the importance of taking Rags to Hyacinth Hill, but then he did not know that Rags was to figure in certain drawings which perhaps would make him famous one of these days. Well, she would know her lessons to-morrow if she had to sit up till midnight.

After lunch she shut herself in her room, safe from all distractions, and set to work. Half an hour later Billy looked in.

"Say, Betsy, can't you read some?"

"No, indeed, I wish I could," was her reply, made without lifting her eyes.

William came in and lounged at the window. A fine rain was falling, freezing as it fell, and

the view of the mill stream winding through the meadows, so charming in summer, was dreary enough to-day.

"How long is it going to take you?" he asked at length.

"Oh, Billy, don't bother. You know how Cousin Charles spoke to me."

"You always have plenty of time to give to Louis Gilderoy, I notice," William exclaimed.

"Why, Billy, that is not so. You don't understand. Can't Miss Una read to you?"

"You know very well she is at the McLeans'. But don't let it worry you," with which polite sarcasm William retired.

"I don't see what makes Billy so disagreeable," Elizabeth said to herself. "I am sorry for him, but I can't read to him when I have to study."

It did occur to her that if she had not let herself get so behindhand with everything she might have had time for the usual reading; however, she put the thought aside with the excuse that she couldn't help it.

She did not think of William again till she went down to the dinner-table, where from his silence she concluded he was still vexed with her.

Miss Una inquired if he were not feeling well — a question he seemed inclined to resent a little, but he did not refuse her offer to read aloud.

Elizabeth felt reluctant to go back to her studies, the sitting room was so cheerful. She lingered at the door a moment while Miss Una, the lamplight falling prettily on her silver hair, adjusted her glasses and opened her book. Billy lay stretched on the sofa with a high-backed chair before him to shield his eyes.

The next morning the truth could no longer be concealed. There was something more than usually wrong with those eyes. With his head on his arms William answered Miss Una's questions meekly, while Elizabeth stood by, an anxious listener.

There wasn't anything to do yesterday. It was so stupid. He had just turned the leaves of a book that lay on the sitting-room table, — a detective story that came in a case from the Book-lover's. He had not meant to read it, but he was interested before he knew it and forgot about his eyes for ever so long. This was the confession, made in muffled tones.

Miss Unadilla looked at Elizabeth, who replied

to the question in her eyes. "I was so busy yesterday, I just had to study." Then she added, "Oh, Billy, I am so sorry. I wish you hadn't."

"Such a silly book, too. I don't know how I came to put it on the list." Miss Una sighed, as much as to say if Billy were going to ruin his eyes, it was a pity not to do it in a better cause.

This was an unhappy day. William was too miserable either to be scolded or entertained. The danger of losing his eyesight altogether had been strongly impressed upon him by the oculist, and fear now exaggerated the pain he suffered. Elizabeth, conscience-smitten, was ready to devote herself to him, but there was nothing she could do.

As if this were not trouble enough, Miss Unadilla called her aside for a serious talk. Something was wrong, she said. Elizabeth was neglecting her duties, she did not keep her room in order, and then Miss Una produced a pretty light dress, worn during the holidays, which she had found tossed carelessly on a shelf, a mass of wrinkles.

"I do put things in order, but they won't stay," the culprit cried despairingly, an excuse Miss Una was too hard-hearted to accept.

Elizabeth cried herself to sleep that night, still unable to see exactly what the trouble was.

In the morning Miss Una and William left on the early train for Baltimore to consult the oculist, and later Dr. Milward was called to a neighboring town to conduct a funeral service, so it happened that the Gray Friar found only a doleful little girl in the sitting room when he walked in that afternoon.

Elizabeth had declined Belle's invitation to walk up to Hyacinth Hill, and was sitting with her head on her hand in unhappy idleness.

"All alone?" asked the Gray Friar, smiling at the pensive face, which he had never before seen anything but merry. He brought in with him a breath of frosty air and a general impression of helpfulness and good cheer.

"Yes," Elizabeth answered, and going on to explain, her eyes suddenly filled, and she hid her face in the sofa pillow.

"Come," said the Gray Friar, "there is a discovery I made a long time ago, — it is that there isn't any trouble which can't be helped a little by a look at the sky. This is just the day for a walk. Let's go somewhere and talk it over as we go."

His very tone helped. Reluctantly she yielded.

The day was cold with a crisp snow under foot, and the sky a mass of soft gray clouds, so filmy their silver lining shone through. By the time they reached Main Street and turned in the direction of Red Hill, Elizabeth's cheeks had grown rosy and her heart less heavy.

Her companion strode along by her side, his hands in the pockets of his comfortable gray coat. From the beginning he had seemed like an old friend, and now Elizabeth forgot that this was the first time she had seen him since she had learned his name. An encouraging "Well" brought out the whole story, even to Miss Una's reproof.

"I am all mixed about it," she said. "I thought it was right to help Louis, but that made me get behind with my lessons, and when I tried to make it up, I couldn't read to Billy, so he went and hurt his eyes, and now perhaps he'll go blind. O dear! Cousin Charles said I was robbing Peter to pay Paul."

"I see," said the Gray Friar; "it all came from mistaking your path. Every now and

then we come to a place where the road branches, where it is difficult to decide which way to take. It was natural and right for you to wish to help your friend, but it seems you gave him more time than was yours to give. Lessons and your duty to William came first. Don't you think so? And if you will pardon a friend who has made the same mistake, wasn't there some selfishness in it? Being with Louis was perhaps more interesting than lessons."

Elizabeth nodded meekly.

"But you mustn't despair," the Gray Friar went on. "Take courage and learn wisdom by your mistakes. It is the only way, and if we do not forget what we are seeking, all will come right in the end."

"I often think about the city,—‘some fair city,’ you know," Elizabeth said, looking up with an earnest light in her eyes. "Cousin Charles read us part of the poem about the death of King Arthur," she added.

"Then perhaps you remember what he said about the island-valley of Avilion, where he was going?"

“Where falls not hail or rain or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.’

If we travel bravely and well, we shall surely come to our own.”

“I am afraid I shall be a long time finding my city, at this rate,” Elizabeth said pensively.

“Some day, quite unexpectedly, you will see the gleam of its spires in the distance.”

“Have you ever seen yours?” Elizabeth asked quickly.

The Gray Friar smiled. “Just a glimpse, perhaps,” he said.

When at the top of the hill they turned, they faced a golden sunset that flooded the wintry world with a heavenly radiance. They smiled at each other. “Let’s take it as a prophecy of things to come,” the Gray Friar suggested.

They walked on in happy silence, with a glow in their hearts like the glow on their faces. When they reached the bottom of the hill, Elizabeth said, “I am coming to your lecture tomorrow.”

“Are you interested in moral education?” asked the Gray Friar.

"Is that what you are going to talk about?"

"That is my subject in general."

Elizabeth laughed. "I think I'll try it," she said.

As is so often the case, the day which began in gloom ended in brightness. They found Miss Una and William at home before them, and with good news. The doctor had pronounced the injured eye much improved, in spite of the strain it had been subjected to. The Gray Friar stayed to dinner and made himself very agreeable. Afterward there was a meeting of some gentlemen in Dr. Milward's study.

"I was selfish, Billy," Elizabeth said as they went upstairs together. "The Gray Friar made me see it. What Louis was doing was so interesting I neglected my lessons and you. Of course I care a great deal more for you than I do for Louis, because you are my brother."

"Do you really, Betsy? I began to think you didn't." William was in a softened mood to-night.

"Indeed, indeed I do. And I never could

have forgiven myself if anything had happened to your eyes."

"I was pretty mad at you, but still that wasn't any excuse for hurting my eyes over that silly book," William acknowledged.

"I suppose you got out of the right path, too. The Gray Friar says it is easy to make mistakes sometimes. That is what I did."

"Are you and he still talking about paths?" said William.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

THE LECTURER

AFTER Professor Whitney's first lecture those especially interested in the enterprise drew a breath of relief. Hereafter there need be no anxiety concerning the size of his audiences.

Friendship was not a lecture town. Smaller places near by had two or three university extension courses during a winter, while Friendship complacently ignored its opportunities and had none. But this time Mrs. Lawrence's efforts were crowned with success.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the lecturer's views were accepted without question. By no means. Colonel Parton, Dr. Milward, and Dr. Pierce walked up street together discussing it warmly.

"I don't deny he has an interesting way of putting things, and I'm going to hear him

again; but some of his ideas strike me as bosh," said the colonel.

"Instead of putting away childish things, it seems to me Professor Whitney would have us hold on to them," added Dr. Pierce.

"Yet he is not the first who would set a child in the midst," suggested Dr. Milward.

"One must doubt if myths and fairy tales constitute the mental food that makes great men," Dr. Pierce continued. "Certainly the great men of the past had a different diet."

"The great men find their own food, I suspect. It is the average person for whom Professor Whitney is enlisted, if I understand. I don't myself indorse all his ideas; but the old order changes, we can't overlook that," Dr. Milward replied.

"Working according to nature may be all very well, but it is a radical change from the methods in vogue when I was a boy. It was all against nature then. I rather agree with Dr. Pierce. It sounds too easy to develop good, tough mental muscle and bone," said the colonel.

"I never should have gone if Mrs. Parton

hadn't sent me a ticket," said Miss Martha Doane, joining Miss Unadilla on her way home. "I as good as told Mrs. Lawrence I wouldn't go. She makes me tired."

"Mrs. Lawrence means well," Miss Una replied, smiling. "Well, how did you like it?"

"To tell you the truth, I liked it. It was a real treat. He is a fine speaker. I had my mind so full of the sitting-room curtains that Cinthy tore so in the wash I didn't know as I'd hear a word, but they went clean out of my head before he had said ten sentences. I hear Professor Whitney is very rich and just lectures for charity. Is that so?"

"I had not heard it. I think he is to be paid for these lectures," Miss Una replied.

"There's a lot of truth in what he said about people not being taught to use their hands these days. Well, I'm going in here to ask for Dr. Grant." Miss Martha paused with her hand on the gate. "He had a stroke yesterday, and I rather guess he'll not go out again with his hat on."

Mrs. Parton overtook Miss Unadilla a few moments later. "I have been wondering what

Miss Martha thought about the lecture. Belle couldn't go, so I sent the ticket over to her," she said.

"She seemed very much pleased, as everybody was," Miss Una answered.

"I like *him* so much," Mrs. Parton continued, "that I don't care what he says. I am not clever enough to criticise. I haven't the least doubt the colonel and Dr. Milward are pulling his theories to pieces; but to me he was very 'convincing' — isn't that the proper word?"

"It sounds well," Miss Una said, laughing.

"If I had my boys to bring up again, they should learn to do housework and their mending. I told the colonel this morning they were just a set of kings, he and the boys, created to be waited on. — Good afternoon, Hyacinth. What did you think of the lecture?" as Miss Gilderoy crossed the street and joined them.

"Your salutation has almost the familiar sound of 'Have you used Pear's soap?'" said the young lady. "I was interested, very much. He is a magnetic speaker, and I suppose what he said is all true."

"Yes; hasn't he a pleasant face when he

talks? At first I thought him stern-looking. I don't want to lose such good company, won't you come in for a while?" Mrs. Parton held her gate hospitably open.

Miss Una and Hyacinth declined the invitation and walked on together.

"Do you know anything about Professor Whitney—where he is from?" Hyacinth looked at Miss Una intently as she asked the question.

"I really know nothing about him except that he was connected with the Warren Fielding University recently. He stayed with us last night; but before dinner the children monopolized him, and afterward there was a meeting of gentlemen in Cousin Charles's study. I don't know what for. He is very pleasant. I should like to have you know him, Hyacinth."

"I have had two encounters with him in the guise of Betsy's Gray Friar," Hyacinth said, smiling.

She walked up the hill, thinking of the lecturer rather than the lecture. There was no doubt in her mind that he was her aunt's heir. She had thought so from the first. She had hesitated whether or not to attend the lecture, but

it seemed best to go, and now she was glad she had gone. No prejudice could blind her to the truth that here was a man of learning and spiritual insight, and seeing this she saw her aunt's will in a new light.

Madam Gilderoy, though eccentric, had not lacked common sense. If this was the man she had educated, she might well have felt proud of the result, and have been willing to intrust to him the carrying out of any plans she might have had. More than ever Hyacinth wondered what these plans could have been.

Louis had given her the impression of an ordinary, even an ill-bred, man. As she thought of this Hyacinth recalled her own curt note declining an interview. There was something about that request of his she did not understand, but she half wished now that she had consented to see him.

He had recognized her that day at the stile, it seemed, though how she could not guess. Why had he asked if Hyacinth Hill was for sale? Did he wish to acquire all the Gilderoy property? The thought brought a flush to her face, which faded as she reflected that the day

might come soon when she would be glad to sell it to any purchaser.

"Unless you feel otherwise about it, I should prefer not to have the matter mentioned at present. Of course it must gradually come out, but just now there is no need of spreading it abroad."

"Certainly, Martin, I shall say nothing," Dr. Milward replied; "and Miss McLean is a pretty safe person," he added, with a smile in Miss Una's direction.

"I'll try to keep it," Miss Una said, "but I am so surprised. I did not dream that Betsy's Gray Friar and Madam Gilderoy's heir would turn out to be the same person. We had very different ideas on the subject."

"You can see my position is in some respects an awkward one," Professor Whitney said. "Madam Gilderoy's will took me completely by surprise; and while it makes possible the fulfilment of one of my air-castles, it entails much responsibility and some disappointment. It is perfectly natural that her nephew and niece should, under the circumstances, feel hardly that

so much money belonging to their family should be bestowed elsewhere. I only resent the feeling the boy seemed to have, that I was accountable for it through my influence over Madam Gilderoy. I think I met her in all about four times, and exchanged as many letters. I deeply regret that she did not divide her estate."

Miss Una nodded. "It would have been more comfortable, and easier for Hyacinth, too."

"I wrote to Miss Gilderoy in accordance with her aunt's wish, to ask if I might explain the plans Madam Gilderoy had made, but she declined to see me. It is unfortunate in view of her hostility that those plans must be carried out here in Friendship."

"Hostility is too strong a word. I think Hyacinth does not understand. She will be won over in the end. In the meantime let things work out in their way," said the minister.

"I have found that a great deal of our trouble comes from impatience. We can't wait to let things unfold naturally," Miss Una said, adding hastily, "Not that I think you are impatient. It was only that, as William tells Elizabeth sometimes, it seemed a good place for a moral."

Professor Whitney smiled. "An excellent place," he said; "I am afraid I am not as patient as I might be."

"“They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength,”” Dr. Milward quoted.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

A BIT OF SUCCESS

“**I** LIKED your lecture. I did not understand it all, but the part about stories was very interesting. Billy thought so too.” Elizabeth smoothed and carefully folded a blue ribbon as she spoke. It was Saturday morning, and true to her resolution she had brought her ribbon box down to the sitting room to be put in order while Pearl was sweeping upstairs.

The Gray Friar had dropped in to say good-bye, and was watching her with an amused expression in his eyes.

“Thank you. I am glad you found something in it. The next time I come I want to have a talk with you on educational matters.”

Elizabeth laughed. “That sounds like a joke,” she said.

“It is not, I assure you. Is it possible one girl can wear so many ribbons?” he added.

“Not all at once, but you want them to match, you know. You ought to be glad you don’t have to wear them, it is such a nuisance to keep them in order.” Elizabeth sighed.

“How about cravats?” asked the Gray Friar.

“They aren’t nearly so much trouble. Billy hangs his on the back of a chair and Miss Una puts them away.”

“Fortunate Billy. But, after all, the outside order is a small part of it. Aren’t we always having to readjust our inner life? We collect our thoughts, smooth out our ruffled serenity, rearrange our ideas, and change our minds generally.”

“Why, so we do,” said Elizabeth. “I had not thought of that.”

“And a well-ordered inner life makes a well-ordered outer life,” the Gray Friar continued.

Betsy regarded him earnestly. “I am going to try to keep in the right path after this,” she said. “You helped me smooth things out.”

“It is very pleasant to have you say so.”

“I am glad you are coming to lecture again. Billy and I used to wonder what you were. At first I thought you must be a preacher, and he said you were a travelling man.”

"And you find I am both," the Gray Friar said, smiling. "You know I told you I was a sort of tramp. I have been lecturing up and down the road this winter."

"Do you remember the day when I sat on the bridge and you came by and told me you had seen the lady of the manor?"

"Yes."

"It seems a good while ago, doesn't it?" Betsy looked meditative. "That afternoon I went up to Hyacinth Hill and saw Miss Hyacinth for the first time. I told her about your giving me half of the apple, and telling me the lady of the manor gave it to you."

"You did?"

"Yes, and she said you were a benevolent gentleman." Betsy's eyes were mischievous.

"I fear she will not keep her good opinion of me long."

"Oh, yes, she will, I am sure. She liked your lecture. Miss Una said so."

Just after the Gray Friar left, Billy came in. "Say, Betsy, I met Miss Hyacinth down town, and she wanted to know what had become of you. She said to tell you Louis had some news for you."

Elizabeth upset her ribbon box in her excitement. "Oh, good! It must be something nice. Can't you go up there with me this afternoon?"

William, however, had promised to help Harry Parton, one of Belle's younger brothers, with an engine he was constructing. "I'll come for you, though," he said, not without some curiosity to learn the secret, if this were it.

"Well, Betsy, I began to think I was never to see you again," was Louis's greeting. "Perhaps you don't care to hear my news."

"Oh, Louis, you know I do. I have been having a dreadful time. I didn't know my lessons, and I wasn't good to Billy, and he hurt his eyes," Elizabeth burst out in breathless confession.

"You are an awful sinner, no doubt; but just look at this!"

Hyacinth stood beside her brother, smiling. "So you were in the secret," she said.

"Yes, Betsy, the *Journal* has taken 'The Seamstress'; isn't that great? Here is the letter. They wish to see more of my work, but of course the check is the best part." Louis waved aloft a small piece of paper.

"He is so proud of it he won't let me have



"LOUIS WAVED ALOFT A SMALL PIECE OF PAPER."

it cashed for him," his sister said, patting his shoulder.

"It is too lovely for anything! Louis, I am so glad, and so proud that I mailed it," Elizabeth cried, clapping her hands.

"Of course I know it is only a small thing. I may fall down next time, but it makes me feel as if I could perhaps do something. I have no end of ideas." Louis's face was flushed with happy excitement.

"It isn't small, it is big, and we are as proud of you as we can be. Aren't we, Miss Hyacinth? You see, Louis, your path is leading somewhere, after all. I do wish you knew the Gray Friar."

"I think I like your sermons best, Betsy," Louis said, laughing. "At any rate, as you say, I am glad our paths crossed this winter."

On more than one occasion Elizabeth had enlarged upon her favorite fancy, and it had perhaps impressed him more than he cared to own. "Hyacinth is making money, too," he said. "She has sold some violets."

Hyacinth laughed. "My violets are doing beautifully, but I hardly expect to make a fortune with them. I leave that to my clever brother."

Life was indeed a see-saw affair, she thought, as she left Elizabeth and Louis in merry discussion over his drawings, trying to decide what he should send next. To-day a bit of success had brightened the world for her brother. What a power to cheer or depress lay in small things! She would make the most of the gleam of sunshine. Was not Louis improving? Did it not seem that she had done wisely in coming to Hyacinth Hill? If she had to part with the place later on, at least they had had this winter.

When she returned to the sitting room, Belle Parton and William had arrived, and Louis was receiving congratulations again.

"So this is the secret Betsy wouldn't tell us the night we met her coming from the post-office," William said.

"And you were so cross about it," Belle added.

"I cross? Never!"

"You are spoiled, that is what you are," Belle insisted severely. "I should never think of waiting on Jack as Betsy does on you."

"We are in the minority, Billy. You may as well hold your peace," said Louis.

"What are you going to do when you make your fortune, Louis?" Belle asked.

"I'll invite you all to visit me," he answered gayly.

"Here?" inquired Elizabeth.

"Wherever I am. I mean to have several homes, but I think we will hold on to this — won't we, Hyacinth? because it belongs in the family, and because I met Betsy here." Louis smiled mischievously at Elizabeth.

"How touching!" cried Belle.

"I shall have a yacht, of course, and we'll cruise about and have a grand time. I am not going to shut myself up. I am going to be popular in spite of everything."

"Does any one want tea?" Hyacinth asked.

"Why, yes; we must drink to the author's health," said Billy.

So presently Ranney appeared with an old tray of inlaid satinwood on which were the tea things; odd little cups without handles and the didactic tea-pot, as Louis called it.

"The decorator of this tea-pot believed in combining pleasure and instruction," said Belle.

"He put a garden scene below the mottoes."

"It is a tea-pot after Betsy's own heart," said Louis.

"Do I preach much, Miss Hyacinth?" cried Elizabeth.

"Not half so much as he needs, dear," Hyacinth replied.

"Belle can't go yachting with us," said Billy. "She is going to be a doctor."

"I'd like to know if a doctor can't have a holiday now and then?" Belle said indignantly.

"Belle a doctor? nonsense!" Louis exclaimed.

"I don't see why," cried the young lady, warmly. "I assure you I am going to do something worth while."

"Oh, maybe you'll begin, but first thing you know you'll get married."

"I'll not at all. How absurd you are! Everybody doesn't have to be married," said Belle.

"You'd think so from books," put in Billy. "Now there are Cooper's novels spoiled by a lot of silly love."

"Oh, Billy," laughed Hyacinth, "you'll be changing your mind one of these days."

"I don't like sentimental things," Billy declared stoutly, "like the lily maid, who died and went floating down the river because Launcelot wouldn't love her. Elizabeth's teacher read it

to the class last winter, and they thought it was great." His scorn was tremendous.

"Why, no, I didn't exactly, Billy. It is a beautiful poem, isn't it, Miss Hyacinth? But I don't think she had much pride," said Elizabeth.

Hyacinth was still laughing. "I suppose Elaine belonged to a simpler age than ours, when people did not feel obliged to hide their feelings; but I confess a lack of sympathy for her."

The merry talk went on till the darkness warned them it was time to go.

"Some one is buying up land around here, Miss Hyacinth," Belle said as she fastened her coat. "Charlotte Ellis told me her father had sold several acres across the road. You'd better be inquiring what they are going to do with it. Charlotte thought it was for some sort of institution."

"I don't know what good inquiring would do. I couldn't help it," Hyacinth answered. "If it is anything disagreeable, I shall have to move away."

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

THE GRAY FRIAR AGAIN

“**I** WISH to learn to be economical, and ten eggs sounds extravagant.” Miss Gilderoy spoke without lifting her eyes from the cook-book which lay open before her on Dr. Milward’s study table.

When a silence of some few seconds followed the opening of the door, she looked up and met the glance of the Gray Friar.

“I beg your pardon,” he said. “I did not know there was any one here. Elizabeth let me in.”

“I should ask yours for greeting you with such a commonplace remark.” Miss Gilderoy’s manner did not show the annoyance she felt at this encounter.

“It depends upon how it is treated whether a subject is commonplace. Economy and eggs, when intelligently considered, are both interesting and good.”

“I confess to finding little that is interesting in the first. But perhaps I haven’t the intelligence,” Miss Gilderoy went on hastily, as it occurred to her she did not care to discuss economy with Professor Whitney. Across the back of the hand that lay on the cook-book was the red mark of a burn; she appeared to study it critically as she added, “My cook is on the sick list at present, and I am but a poor substitute. Won’t you sit down? Miss Unadilla will be in presently. Dr. Milward is out of town.”

The Gray Friar sat down in the minister’s chair; his eyes, too, were on the scar. “Cooking is an important science, and should be taught in all the schools,” he remarked.

“Do you cook yourself? I mean, do you cook?” Miss Gilderoy looked at her hand again, determined not to smile.

“I am too old a camper not to know how to cook. I have on occasion cooked myself, partially, in the process of cooking something else.” He spoke gravely.

The conversation flagged. It was strange, Hyacinth thought, to be sitting there talking

with a man she had declined to meet; to be wondering if he knew that she knew who he was, and to be unable to explain that on rather slight grounds she had concluded he was probably not a gentleman. Would Miss Una never come? She would have liked to speak of his lectures, to ask questions, if he had been any one else.

"Why, Miss Hyacinth, I didn't know you were here!" Elizabeth exclaimed.

Hyacinth could have hugged her for appearing before the silence became embarrassing. "Yes, I came to talk domestic economy with Miss Una, but she has deserted me. Louis doesn't like my cooking and sighs for Aunt Hilda."

"It is too bad she is sick," said Elizabeth, sitting down on an ottoman and looking first at Hyacinth and then at Professor Whitney.

"The Gray Friar—" she began, then hesitated.

"I like the title, go on," he said.

She laughed. "Well, the Gray Friar has the most interesting way of teaching cooking at his school. It would be fun, and so would all the other things. I should not know how to choose."

"I did not know you had a school," Miss Gilderoy looked at the Gray Friar.

"It is hardly more than a castle in Spain as yet," he replied.

"He has told me a good deal about it," Elizabeth continued. "You make things out of wood, for instance,—useful things and beautiful things too,—what you can, and what you like; and you read stories about trees, and learn how they grow and their names. It is to be in the country, so you can do that out of doors. I wish I could go to his school."

"You will be too old, Betsy, by the time it is ready to open unless you will come and teach for me. Why wouldn't that be a good idea, since you appreciate the spirit of it so thoroughly?"

"I'd like to, only I am afraid I shan't know how to do any of those lovely things."

"I am sure you could tell stories."

"I often wonder what I shall do when I am grown." Betsy bent her head on her hand meditatively.

"Something quite different from anything you expect, probably," Hyacinth said.

"Perhaps quite different from anything you would choose," the Gray Friar added.

Hyacinth wondered if he could be thinking of himself. Surely he had nothing to complain of.

"Still, if it is the only path that leads to the city, it must be the best,—the one we would choose if we knew." Elizabeth looked from one to the other questioningly.

The Gray Friar smiled reassuringly. "It must be," he said.

"I told Miss Hyacinth about the paths," Elizabeth was saying, when Miss Una opened the door and ushered Mrs. Parton in.

"Dear me, this is an unexpected pleasure. Hyacinth and Dr. Whitney," cried that lively lady. "How do you do?"

Miss Unadilla looked embarrassed as she greeted the Gray Friar.

"Well, Dr. Whitney, you have set all the learned ones of Friendship by the ears," Mrs. Parton continued. "The rest of us accept you blindly, and enjoy ourselves. I don't know about Miss Gilderoy. She has a way of looking wise and saying nothing."

"If there is any wisdom, I fear it is all on the outside," Hyacinth said, rising. "Just now my thoughts are bent on culinary matters."

"I have the recipe for you, but need you go?" asked Miss Una.

"Yes, thank you, I must. I have to make biscuits for tea."

"You haven't begun to battle with the cook problem, Hyacinth? Then you little know what is before you," exclaimed Mrs. Parton.

"That reminds me," said Hyacinth, "of one of Louis's remarks. When I was a little girl I had a pet dog I was very fond of, and while I was away from home the dog died. Louis was deeply interested, and when I returned, not knowing what had happened, he greeted me with, 'Hyacinth, you don't know what you haven't got.' I believe I prefer the bliss of ignorance."

"I like to know the worst," said Mrs. Parton, laughing. "What do you say, Dr. Whitney?"

"I am not above deluding myself with vain hopes sometimes, but I grant it is safer to know the truth," was his reply.

"Do you know," Mrs. Parton went on, "I

have been trying to think where I have heard your name recently. It seems to me there was something interesting connected with it."

"Whitney is not an uncommon name," Miss Unadilla hastened to say.

"I am glad it was something interesting," the Gray Friar remarked calmly.

"I am not at all sure it was anything to your credit," Mrs. Parton said, laughing. "I can't recall it."

As she moved about her kitchen getting her biscuits under way, Miss Gilderoy's thoughts were busy with many things. She was glad these lectures would soon be over, and Professor Whitney away for good and all. It seemed one of those ironical happenings, that she should have come to Friendship to encounter this man.

She acknowledged to herself that under other circumstances she would have liked to know him. That first impression of strength and gentleness remained. His manner toward Elizabeth, for instance, was charming. She recalled his quiet "It must be" to her question about the paths. Was it meant that her own

path and the Gray Friar's should cross? It must be, as it had happened. But what good could come of it? Was it to show her mistake, and rebuke her pride?

Owing to the biscuits, Hyacinth brought a flushed face to the tea-table. They were good, and met with Louis's approval, so she felt rewarded. "I shall learn in time," she said.

"I don't want you to," her brother replied discontentedly. "You were meant for something different. You are spoiling your hands."

"Not necessarily. Miss Una has the prettiest hands, and she often cooks. Louis," she added, "what sort of a person, in appearance I mean, was the man to whom Aunt Gilderoy left her money?"

"I don't know. What suggested him? Ordinary, I should say. Aunt Gilderoy's people were, you know."

"Should you say he was an educated person? Somehow I received the impression of an ill-bred man."

"I saw him only once, and I hardly noticed the fellow. What started you on him?"

"I suppose it is the fact that Betsy's friend, the lecturer, has the same name."

"Why, so he has. I wonder if they are related," Louis said carelessly.

There was no need of enlightening him at present, Hyacinth decided, and dropped the subject.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

A RUMOR CONFIRMED

IT began as a rumor. Some one was buying ground out on the Mill Road. An institution of some sort was to be established there. Those inclined to a dark view of things settled upon an insane asylum, while an orphan's home, a sanitarium, and a home for the aged and infirm each had supporters. Last of all it became a school, and gradually the other institutions retired from the field.

Then it was to be some special kind of school, and it began to be connected with Dr. Whitney, who, having finished his lectures in Friendship, was not seen for a time. He was not far away, however, and April found him back again.

March had been cold and stormy, but a few warm days made apparent a faint, green haze over the landscape that foretold the time of leaves. Elizabeth and the Gray Friar walked

out the Mill Road together, she very full of enthusiasm over the new school.

"And it is really to be the sort of school you told me about?" she asked.

"I am going to try for it," the Gray Friar replied. "Here," pointing out a site nearly opposite Hyacinth Hill, "is where the main building will stand. I hope to begin breaking ground this month. Beyond, where you see that tall sycamore, we shall probably put the gymnasium. Other buildings will follow in course of time."

"I can't wait to see it. And I suppose I shall not be here next winter," said Elizabeth, regretfully.

"But you are coming to teach for me some day," her companion answered. "It is hard to wait," he continued. "It will be a long time before we are in running order. We have a house down in the town which, remodelled, will answer for the kindergarten and primary work next year."

"Do you think you will have many children?" Elizabeth asked, looking at the subject practically. "I should think you might, only there aren't so very many children in Friendship."

"I expect a small beginning, but it will grow. The tuition is to be free to any one living in the state."

"It will cost a great deal, won't it?"

"Yes."

Then the Gray Friar must be very rich, she decided.

"What are you going to call it?" she asked. "Billy and I have named it the Gray Friar's School."

"Before I tell you that," he said, "I want to explain how I came to be doing it at all. I haven't talked much about it, for several reasons, but it will all be known very soon now. You remember that September day when I found you on the bridge? I was doing some prospecting then."

They had reached the front entrance to Hyacinth Hill. Elizabeth looked up at the house. "I wonder how Louis is," she remarked. "He had a cold last week, and he was discouraged because his drawings came back. I wish he knew you."

"He wouldn't care for the acquaintance."

"Why, what makes you think so?" Elizabeth glanced curiously at her friend.

"That is part of the story," he replied.

He seemed in no haste to begin, and they turned and walked back as far as the stile in silence. "Suppose we rest here in the sunshine," he suggested.

The sun was warm, the air soft as velvet, along the roadside the grass was thick and green and starred with dandelions.

"I first saw Hyacinth Hill in the springtime," the Gray Friar said, looking up at Elizabeth as she sat on the step above him.

"Was it long ago?" she asked.

"Rather. I was ten years old."

Elizabeth tried to think of the Gray Friar as a little boy, but found it difficult.

"My father died when I was a mere baby," he continued, "leaving my mother little or nothing, and for years she supported herself and me by sewing. We lived in a small Illinois town, and I went to school and did what I could to help her. I loved my mother dearly, and my one dream was of the time when I should be big enough to work and take care of her.

"Her dream was to have me educated. Her

own opportunities had been few, but her ambition for me was unbounded, even when her failing health made it seem hopeless. I was too young to understand her condition or her great anxiety for my future. I only knew she was distressed. I also knew we were very poor, and that sometimes there was barely enough to eat. At length in desperation, for she had a great deal of pride, my mother appealed to a cousin of my father's, who many years before had married a rich man. She asked nothing for herself—I suppose she knew she had but a short time to live—only that in case of her death my education should be provided for.

“My cousin replied kindly, and asked my mother and me to visit her for a week or two, that she might judge for herself, I suppose, whether or not we were worthy of help. And that is how I happened to come to Friendship the first time.”

“Do you mean—?” Elizabeth began, then hesitated.

The Gray Friar went on. “It was a great event to me, that long journey; but my pleasure was quickly turned to grief, for my mother died

suddenly a week after we arrived at my cousin's house.

"I was a timid child at best, and you can guess how desolate I was. There seemed nothing left to live for. My cousin was kind, but she was an elderly person, little used to children, and her stateliness frightened me. The person to whom I clung was Dr. Milward. He befriended me and gave me courage."

"And it was he who told you about going out into the unknown?" said Elizabeth.

"Yes, he made me see that I could still carry out my mother's wishes, though she was no longer with me. He took me himself to the university town where my cousin thought best to place me, and for years kept watch over me. And there, to finish the story, I lived in the family of one of the professors until I graduated. I was fortunate enough to win a scholarship that enabled me to go abroad, and to be from that time on independent. In all these years I saw my cousin only once or twice. She became interested in a little book I published, and wrote to me about it; after that I saw her and discussed it with her on several occasions. But

I was not in any way prepared to find myself her heir. When she died she left me nearly all her large estate, in the hope that I would use it in carrying out the ideas expressed in my book."

"So it was Madam Gilderoy, and you are the man!" Elizabeth exclaimed solemnly.

"I am the man. And now you understand why the school is to be here in Friendship, and is to be called the Gilderoy School of Manual Work, and also why your friend would not care to know me."

"It is the funniest thing I ever heard," Elizabeth said. "I mean not funny, but strange. It is just because Louis doesn't know you. Why, I had an idea myself that you weren't—"

"A desirable acquaintance?" the Gray Friar suggested.

"Does Miss Hyacinth know?"

"I should think she must. I have made no effort to conceal my identity. I simply have not advertised it."

"If I were you, I'd go to see her and tell her all about it."

The Gray Friar shook his head. "That

wouldn't do. You see, Betsy, it is quite natural they should feel hardly toward me. It is a queer world. It seems as if fate were laughing at us sometimes." He looked away across the meadow. "I have had a way all my life of recognizing, almost at a glance, the persons I want for friends." His eyes came back and met Elizabeth's with a smile, causing her to ask —

"Did you want me?"

"Indeed I did. The very first minute I saw you; and the best friends I have have been recognized just in that fashion. The first time I saw Miss Gilderoy I determined she should some day be my friend."

"When was that?" asked Elizabeth.

"A good while ago. She couldn't have been much older than you are now. After I graduated I called on Madam Gilderoy as I passed through the city on my way abroad. While I talked with her, her niece came in. Probably she never gave a second thought to the awkward fellow her aunt presented to her, but I remember telling myself that some day I was going to be worthy of her friendship."

"Did you see her any more after that?"

"Yes, I saw her a number of times, some years later, but I did not meet her. I was poor and obscure, and she a beautiful heiress, as the story books say; and then, just as I was beginning to get on a little, something happens which while it makes possible the realization of one of my dreams spoils another. Don't you see?" said the Gray Friar.

Elizabeth leaned forward with her folded arms on her knees. "I am sure Miss Hyacinth likes you," she said.

"No; she makes the best of an awkward situation, that is all. However, Betsy, I did not mean to say all this. I have nothing to complain of. There is a lot of work ahead of me that seems worth the doing; and they who travel bravely and well shall surely come to their own. The trouble is we make mistakes and sometimes set our hearts on things that don't belong to us."

"Do you remember what you said once about not knowing what pleasant thing may be waiting around the next turn of the road?" asked Elizabeth.

The Gray Friar laughed. "Yes; I believe it,

too. I suppose the trouble with me is that I had a birthday yesterday and it made me feel that life is slipping away at an alarming rate."

Elizabeth looked at him critically. "I should not think you were so very old," she said.

"Isn't thirty-five rather old?"

"Still, people live to be *very* old nowadays," she answered encouragingly.

The Gray Friar laughed, such a genuine, merry laugh, it showed him young at heart, in spite of the weight of his years.

"Thank you, Betsy," he said. "I am glad I have you for a friend, whatever happens."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND

AN AWKWARD SITUATION

“**A**ND you have known it all this time? I can't see why you kept it such a secret. I hate to be treated like a child,” Louis spoke pettishly, a frown on his face.

He had slipped back of late. His improvement, so marked in the winter, had given place to something of the old languor and depression. Disappointment at the difficulty he met with in disposing of his drawings had much to do with this. In reality he had had rather good fortune for a beginner; but to Louis himself the path to anything like success began to seem hopelessly long and tiresome.

Naturally he was often irritable, and these outbreaks would be followed by bitter self-reproach which Hyacinth found harder to bear than his ill temper. Growth is a slow and sometimes painful progress, with repeated fail-

ures. Louis had taken a long step forward, but because he had lost his old attitude of self-pity he found himself worse rather than better.

All Friendship was talking about the new school and Professor Whitney, pluming itself over its more intellectual neighbors, to whom no such good fortune had come. Louis had the news through the county paper, where the editor took occasion to give the history of the Gilderoy family, and paint in brilliant colors the growing fame of Martin Whitney, and the benefits that would accrue to the village through the establishment there of such an institution.

If it had been about anything else, Louis would have laughed over the elaborate style and lofty diction of the article; but as it was, it came to him with a shock of annoyance he was long in recovering from.

"I did not know about the school until a few days ago, Louis," Hyacinth said. "I guessed Professor Whitney's identity at once, but it seemed useless to trouble you with it. I supposed he would be here only a short time."

"I never heard of anything so disagreeable. Having one's family dragged into print in this

style, and in connection with that man. Now he has the money, why can't he leave us in peace? It is indelicate, it's insulting! Is he determined to flaunt his money in our faces? Why should he come here to found his school?"

"Don't be unjust, Louis. He is not that sort of a man, I am sure."

"What sort of a man? What do you know about him?" Louis demanded.

"I heard one or two of his lectures."

"I don't see how you could have had so little pride."

"And besides," Hyacinth continued, "I can't quite ignore the opinion of Dr. Milward and Mr. Whittredge, and others."

"I don't say he may not be learned, but I do insist that he is lacking in the right sort of feeling to come and plant himself at our door. It looks as if he wished to force us into selling him the place."

Hyacinth was silent for a moment, remembering she had had much the same thought herself. When she spoke it was to say, "You know he did ask the privilege of explaining matters to me, and I declined to meet him."

"That is one comfort," said Louis.

Hyacinth was not so sure of this. She went out into the sweet morning air and stood by the sun-dial. The old place had never seemed so beautiful and homelike. In spite of the anxieties of the winter, each week had increased her attachment to it. Must she give it up? She did need some money so very much.

It was some hours later that Elizabeth found Louis alone and undeniably cross. She was eager to talk about the new school, and she had persuaded herself that the Gilderoy's would feel exactly as she did when they heard the whole story.

"I don't wish his name mentioned," Louis announced. "Everybody has seen fit to make a silly secret of the matter, and now I do not choose to hear about it."

"Why, Louis, I did not know it myself," Elizabeth urged, greatly taken aback. "Do let me tell you —"

"No, I thank you. The less said the better. But just ask your friend from me why he has so little sense of propriety as to put his school at our very door?"

"I know that without asking. It was the only suitable ground he could find, and it is to be called the Gilderoy School."

"The last straw," Louis groaned.

"I don't think you are a bit fair, Louis — not a bit. The Gray Friar didn't want the money, and he isn't spending it for himself. I think you ought to let me tell you what he said; but if you don't want to hear it, I guess I'll go."

"Oh, very well. I can't expect to be so attractive as your other friends." Louis took up a book and opened it.

Elizabeth turned away, disappointed and hurt. Outside she encountered Hyacinth, attending to the planting of her sweet peas; but though she lingered talking with her, she did not mention the subject which was uppermost in her mind.

"I suppose you are very much interested in the new school," Hyacinth said presently, divining the state of affairs. "You must not mind if Louis is a good deal prejudiced against Professor Whitney. He will get over it in time."

Elizabeth brightened at once, and joyfully

assented to Hyacinth's proposal to go in search of wild flowers. As they strolled through the wood, bending and peering about the roots of the trees, finding spring-beauties and anemones in abundance, and now and then a dog-tooth violet, she asked, "Miss Hyacinth, you like the Gray Frair, don't you?"

"I don't know him, Betsy," was her reply.

"He thinks you don't like him," Elizabeth ventured.

"I see no occasion for his thinking about it at all," Miss Gilderoy said with dignity.

"He said," — began Elizabeth, then became absorbed in her flowers.

"What were you going to say?"

"Perhaps he'd rather I wouldn't tell you."

"Oh, very well."

"He told me about coming here when he was a little boy, and how lonely he was when his mother died. Did you know that was her grave, under the cedar? Cousin Charles said so."

Their search brought them out into the meadow before long, and they stopped at the stile to sort their treasures.

"I wonder," said Hyacinth, "if your Gray Friar has all the land he needs."

"Cousin Charles would know. He is one of the trustees. But you aren't going to sell Hyacinth Hill?"

"I don't know. Something must be done for Louis. Dr. Baird advises a course of treatment that will cost a great deal. I may have to have some ready money."

After this what more natural than that Elizabeth seeing Professor Whitney approaching, should hail him. "We can ask him now," she said.

"Miss Hyacinth wants to know," she began as he came near, then becoming conscious that Miss Gilderoy was annoyed, she hesitated, in embarrassment.

"Yes," said the Gray Friar, lifting his hat.

Miss Gilderoy felt some explanation was demanded. "It is quite unnecessary to trouble you. I simply wondered if you had all the ground you need for your school in case I should decide to sell."

The Gray Friar's manner was hesitating. "I trust you are not thinking of parting with Hya-

cinth Hill—that is, I should be unhappy to think that you might find any annoyance—” he paused, rather hopelessly.

Miss Gilderoy looked amused. “You may remember that possessions sometimes have to be parted with, in spite of treasured associations,” she said. “I am reminded that a haughty spirit goes before a fall.”

The Gray Friar recovered himself. “There is a field belonging, I think, to your place which the directors may be glad to purchase. I would suggest that you consult either Dr. Milward or Mr. Whittredge, if you care to consider it.”

Miss Gilderoy thanked him gravely. He had the best of it. He had politely reminded her that he looked upon her refusal to meet him as final, so far as anything connected with the school was concerned.

Elizabeth wondered why the Gray Friar and Miss Hyacinth were not nicer to each other. If he wanted her for a friend, why did he not say so, without more ado? Why didn't he tell her how surprised he was at having the money left him? Betsy thought that all the trouble, if there was any, came from the concealment of their

real feelings ; and why should they be so stupid ?

She had little opportunity to talk with the Gray Friar that evening, as he and Dr. Milward had business to discuss ; but he had brought her what he called a dodger. It was a large card, on which was printed : —

FOR PILGRIMS

God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.

The way to find what you seek is to be worthy of it.

Do not forget the end of the journey in the pleasure or difficulty of your path.

Look for the golden flower of happiness as you go. It grows along every pathway, however difficult. Those who will may gather it.

They who travel bravely and well, shall surely come to their own.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD

AMONG OLD LETTERS

AFTER several false starts spring came in at last. Once more the sky was fair; the willows bending over Friendly Creek saw themselves veiled in misty green that grew each day a deeper tint, the vines on the house at Hyacinth Hill burst into leaf over night, along the wood path violets bloomed lavishly, and the scent of lilacs was in the air.

What could be more pleasant these delicious days than a walk out the Mill Road for a cup of Hyacinth's tea and a social chat? Her Saturday afternoons became popular again.

The only drawback was that it seemed hardly permissible to introduce there the favorite topic of conversation, which caused a certain restraint. Ground was being broken for the new school, and those who had espoused the cause, as they considered it, of the Gilderoy's, and who were

at the same time admirers of Dr. Whitney, were readjusting their minds to the present state of affairs.

A number of persons could now recall the sudden death at Hyacinth Hill, twenty-five years ago, of a relative of Madam Gilderoy, and also dimly remembered that there had been a child, a freckle-faced boy, of whom nothing more was heard. Madam Gilderoy had never confided her affairs to any one in Friendship.

"The long-lost heir," was Mrs. Parton's name for Dr. Whitney. "It is too awkward for anything," she declared. "Think of my wondering right to his face why his name seemed familiar!"

"I think next to having the money themselves, this is the best thing that could happen—to have the family name perpetuated in this manner," said the colonel.

Miss Unadilla, talking to Dr. Milward, wished they could be friends,—the Gilderoy and Martin Whitney.

"It will come," the minister replied confidently. "I have a fancy that Hyacinth regrets a little the position she took at the beginning."

"Why doesn't she say so then?" Miss Una exclaimed, for she was heart and soul enlisted for the Gray Friar.

Dr. Milward smiled. "It isn't so easy to take things back," he said.

Hyacinth showed no more disposition to avoid the subject of the school than she did to dwell upon it. She treated it as of no more concern to her than to any other inhabitant of Friendship. And the revival of the history of the Hyacinth and Gilderoy families stirred a fresh interest in genealogical discussion, and led happily away from less agreeable topics.

Colonel Parton, who was an enthusiast in what his wife called the ancient history of Friendship, drew Hyacinth into a spirited argument one afternoon over some tradition of the Hyacinth family connected with the marriage of her great-grandmother. The matter was left unsettled, and Miss Gilderoy remembering certain old letters sent to her after her aunt's death, by the executor of her estate, went in search of them next day.

"I have an idea that there are some letters of our grandmother here," she said to Louis,

entering the sitting room with the packet in her hand. "I have been meaning for a long time to go over them."

The packet had been tied up and labelled in Madam Gilderoy's own hand, "To be given to my niece, Louise Hyacinth Gilderoy," with a date, a few months before her death.

"I can't say I am much interested," Louis remarked, as his sister laid the bundle on the table and began to untie the tape. It was knotted, and she worked over it for some minutes before she loosened it, and the papers fell apart, ancient-looking, yellow letters, most of them. Among them lay a fresh white envelope, which by its unlikeness to the rest attracted her attention.

She was not in search of anything so new, but she took it up curiously. It was unsealed, and enclosed what appeared to be another envelope. Across one end was written in her aunt's hand, "To be deposited with my other papers."

Hyacinth gazed at it, puzzled. How had it come among these letters? The probable explanation occurred to her. Her aunt, in putting her papers in order, had unintentionally included

this in the packet of old letters, instead of with other papers she was sending to her box.

What could it be? For a moment Hyacinth's vision was blurred, her heart in her throat. Suppose—but it could not be! But might it not be a codicil? If it should be! And she needed money so much. There was a possibility that it was another will. What if the money was theirs, after all?

“Have you found anything interesting?” asked Louis.

“I haven't read any of them yet,” Hyacinth answered, gathering the letters together and carrying them to the window where she would be out of the range of Louis's eyes. She held the envelope in her hand. She hesitated to examine it, from the feeling that it had not been meant for her.

She looked out across the meadows to where above the trees the spires of Friendship showed. For herself, she thought, she did not want the money. She could be content with a simple life, if only Louis had what he needed. It would be put to better use in the Gray Friar's hands than in hers. If by any possibility it should come to her, she felt she should wish to give it back.

A little thought convinced her she had as much right as any one to examine the document. With trembling fingers she drew out the enclosed envelope. The question was settled, for it was addressed to herself and sealed. She cut it open and read:—

“MY DEAR NIECE:

“This letter will be given to you after my death, which I feel cannot be far off. It has been my habit to do what seemed to me right, without making explanations or caring for criticism. I am departing from my usual custom, for I wish you to know why I have disposed of my estate as I have.

“It is a platitude that money does not bring happiness; it is no less true that its possession is often the direct cause of unhappiness, so few persons are fit for the responsibility of large wealth. I grant you have too much character and poise to be hurt by it; but your brother's chance to be a man depends, I clearly see, upon his having an incentive to put to use his talents, otherwise he is likely to degenerate into a mere pleasure lover. He will have enough to finish his college

course and give him a start, and you will not starve with Hyacinth Hill.

“Martin Whitney, to whom I have left most of my money, will, I am confident, use it wisely in carrying out certain educational ideas in which I have become interested through his writings. I have not bound him in any way, believing that freedom is essential to the successful working out of any large plan. I shall not explain why I have such confidence in a man I have talked with only a few times. I am aware I shall be called a fool, but I can stand that. In a letter which will be given to him when you receive this, I have asked him to consult with you in regard to these plans. Your common sense and clear head will be of assistance to him, and I count upon your interest.

“Affectionately your aunt,

“MARIA GILDEROY.”

So this was the explanation of the note she had thought so officious! The present state of affairs was not altered by it, except that now she could speak to Dr. Whitney. A foolish prejudice had kept her from having a part in a great work —

and all the while she had been lamenting her uselessness.

Hyacinth had never had any hard feeling toward her aunt. She was sure if she could have known of Louis's invalidism she would have done more for him. And who could say, even now, that it might not work out for the best?

She sat thinking for some time, then she carried the letter to her brother, and read part of it to him. "You see," she said, "we have been mistaken, you and I."

"If you think I am going to have anything to do with that man, you are very much mistaken," Louis insisted crossly.

"I shall let him know about this letter," said Hyacinth. "For my part, I prefer to be friendly."

The question was, Should she write to the Gray Friar, or wait till she met him again? A dozen different doubts assailed her. Was it not too trifling a matter to write about? Did the delay of the letter sufficiently explain, after all? Quite unable to decide what to do, she did nothing.

At this time William and Elizabeth were away

in Washington, spending the Easter holidays with their father. Without their almost daily visits it seemed very quiet at Hyacinth Hill.

There had been a slight coolness between Louis and Elizabeth of late, which he felt more than he would acknowledge. He had come to depend upon her friendship, and life seemed dull without her bright companionship.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH

AN ACCIDENT

“**I**T is as warm as June to-day,” Mrs. Parton remarked, joining Belle on the porch one afternoon the middle of May. “I ought to go down to see old Mrs. Bailey, — Miss Julia said she was ailing, — but I simply haven’t the energy.”

“I thought I’d get Betsy to go up to Hyacinth Hill with me, but I didn’t finish my work in time,” said Belle, who was studying for her college examinations.

Miss Martha Doane came in at the gate. Her manner was slightly excited. She took the chair Belle gave her and made a few opening remarks, however, before she asked, “Have you heard about the accident?”

“What accident?” Belle inquired, with languid interest, so often Miss Martha’s excitements fell flat.

"I thought you couldn't have heard it, but then you see so much of the Sayres."

"What has happened to the Sayres?" Mrs. Parton asked.

"It is Elizabeth. Luke Ramsey told me. I saw him driving down street just as I was starting out —"

"Is she badly hurt? What was it? Do tell us," Belle urged, with some impatience.

"I am trying to tell you," said Miss Martha, coolly. "I stopped Luke to ask him if his mother could let me have some butter, and he said he had been up to Hyacinth Hill with Dr. Thomas. He said the doctor had just come in from a long drive to the country, when he was telephoned to come to the Gilderoy's, at once, somebody was burned, and as his horse was tired he got Luke to take him."

"Burned?" Belle exclaimed, "and it was Elizabeth?"

"I am telling you what Luke said, and he got it from Uncle Ben, so you can believe it or not as you choose. It seems Louis was out in the grounds somewhere in his chair, and smok-

ing, and somehow or other when he threw his cigar away it set fire to Elizabeth's dress. She was on the grass, playing with the dog, I believe, when all of a sudden her dress was in a blaze.

"Uncle Ben was working at some little distance, and he heard her scream, and saw the flames, but being so rheumatic he couldn't get to her. And he said Louis just jumped right out of his chair when Elizabeth started to run and called to her to stop, and then first thing they knew that man who is building the school—you know—came tearing after her, and pulled off his coat and wrapped it around her and got her down on the grass and put it out. Luke says she is awfully burned, though."

Belle rose. "Oh, mother, do you suppose it is true?" she said.

"I shouldn't put too much stress on the accuracy of a story Luke Ramsey and Uncle Ben got up between them," Mrs. Parton replied. "However, something must have happened. I'll go right up there. I may be of some assistance."

"You can believe it or not as you like, but I

guess they wouldn't have sent for Dr. Thomas in such a hurry if there hadn't been something wrong," said Miss Martha, tossing her head.

"I don't doubt that. I am only hoping for the best," Mrs. Parton answered. "You'll excuse me if I leave you, Miss Martha?"

"Dear little Betsy! I can't bear to think she may be dreadfully hurt," exclaimed Belle.

"She's probably disfigured for life," Miss Martha said, adding, "I'll go with you as far as Dr. Milward's, Mrs. Parton."

"There's Billy!" At sight of a bicycle coming down the street, Belle ran to the gate.

But William only shook his head and called, "I can't stop now. I'll see you on my way back," and went on.

Belle sat alone on the porch, and the half hour that passed before William was seen returning seemed interminable. She went down to meet him. "Is she dreadfully hurt? You can stop a minute, can't you?" she asked.

William left his wheel and came and leaned on the gate. "I don't know. The doctor said she — she wouldn't die," the last word came in

a husky whisper, and Billy gazed steadily across the street for several seconds.

"Come in and rest a minute, you are all tired out," urged Belle. "Is there anything in the world I can do? Mother has gone up there."

"No, thank you. Miss Una and Miss Hyacinth are there, and they have sent for a nurse. I went down to telegraph to father. I have to go back to the drug store presently for something they are putting up," William said, walking beside her to the porch and sitting down on the step.

"Miss Martha told us — she got it from Luke Ramsey. We were hoping it was not so bad as he thought," Belle said.

"I don't know," William said again. "I'm afraid it is. I was at home when it happened, and they wouldn't let me see her. The doctor had just come when I got there, and — she was suffering so — oh, Belle, I can't stand it."

Belle put a sympathetic hand on his arm, her eyes were full of tears. "It may not be as bad as you think, Billy."

"I told her once that she had never had

anything to bear, and now — Betsy is so pretty, you know." The choking in his throat stopped him.

"Indeed she is," Belle replied, thinking of Miss Martha's words. "Wasn't it lucky that Professor Whitney happened to be near?"

"And it was all Louis Gilderoy's fault," Billy burst forth.

"Luke said he got out of his chair and went after her," Belle said incredulously.

"I don't know. They said something about his fainting, but I didn't listen. I don't care for anything but Betsy."

They sat on the step talking for some minutes longer, William finding Belle's sympathy very grateful. They spoke of Elizabeth, of her brightness and sweetness, and on their hearts the mystery of life and death lay heavily. Only a few hours ago she had been with them, and now she seemed far away.

By eight o'clock things were quiet at Hyacinth Hill. The nurse had arrived and been installed, and Elizabeth was asleep. The doctor had given Louis something to quiet him, and he, too, was in

bed. For the first time in four hours Hyacinth had time to sit down and think connectedly.

What a terrible afternoon it had been! From the moment she met Martin Whitney at the door with Elizabeth in his arms, she had seemed to herself to be somebody else. She could not understand her own promptness. How had she known what to do? All her powers had been brought to a focus by the terrible necessity of doing something. There had been a quiet word of suggestion now and again from the Gray Friar, as they worked together over the injured girl. Hyacinth remembered now how tender he was, with a touch as delicate as a woman's. It was the gentleness of great strength.

And after the doctor and Miss Una relieved her of part of the responsibility, she was called to her brother, who had been found in a faint on the sitting-room floor.

The sight of Elizabeth's danger had proved the shock needed to arouse him. The impulse to go to her relief had given him the power, but the horror of it had dazed him so he could do nothing for her.

Louis could not reproach himself bitterly enough. He could think of nothing but Elizabeth. He begged to be allowed to see her, and talked wildly of what he would do if she died. His state of excitement was pitiful. The fact that he had walked from the gate to the house seemed to mean nothing to him. Hyacinth wondered if the restoration would prove only temporary. She was afraid to hope.

When Louis had been restored to consciousness, and to some degree of composure, she came upon the Gray Friar on the back porch having his right hand tied up by Uncle Ben.

"You are hurt and said nothing all this time?" she demanded.

"Only a little," the Gray Friar replied meekly, but he made no objection when she swept Uncle Ben aside and took the hand in charge herself. In the process of bandaging their eyes would meet now and then, and when eyes meet at close range any disguise is difficult. The experience of the afternoon had brought them into a sudden sort of intimacy; they had found each other out. Certainly the Gray Friar encountered no hostility in Hyacinth's eyes, and she found no resentment

in his. So little need did there seem for explanations that Hyacinth quite forgot her aunt's letter.

"If Elizabeth will only get well," was all she said.

And the Gray Friar answered, "I believe she will."

She went over it all, sitting there alone. She had the feeling of having been swept onward by some great wave, so that an hour had brought about what years might have failed to compass.

Presently William stood in the door, a forlorn figure.

"Billy dear, is that you? Come in. Don't look so unhappy." Hyacinth beckoned him to a place beside her on the sofa. "Betsy is going to get well, and the doctor thinks she will not be disfigured. Of course we couldn't help fearing that, but you see it is chiefly her back and one side. Her neck is only a little scorched. Fortunately Dr. Whitney reached her in time to keep the flames from her face."

And William, great boy that he was, broke down and cried from sheer relief. "I don't know what makes me such a baby," he sobbed.

"I like you the better for it, Billy," Hyacinth said, with her arm around him. "It does not seem babyish to me, but that is because I am not a man, I suppose. Louis is breaking his heart over his carelessness," she added.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH

AFTERWARD

THE minister's house was besieged with inquirers, and many found their way out to Hyacinth Hill. Everybody liked Elizabeth. Her sweetness and friendliness had made her a favorite, and from old Mrs. Bailey down, all were anxious to show their solicitude and sympathy in some tangible way. Flowers and fruit and all sorts of things to eat and drink were sent, until a regiment of invalids would have been needed to consume them.

For the first few days the story of the accident took on new and interesting features hourly, as the one spectator, Uncle Ben, was in demand, and hugely enjoyed his importance.

With each recital Professor Whitney's heroism grew, and his slight injuries became serious. The climax was reached by the report that he lay at the point of death at Dr. Milward's, having in-

haled the flame. His appearance at the post-office corrected this.

Though the first fears for Elizabeth were not realized, the shock had been very great, aside from the burns, and it would not be possible to move her for weeks, the physicians said. Mr. Sayre and William were the only ones allowed to see her, and they for not more than a few minutes at a time.

She was a very wan likeness of the rosy, sunny Betsy they were used to, but she could smile at them. "I didn't know you were here, father," she said.

"My darling, you did not suppose I could stay away when you were so badly hurt," he replied, bending to kiss her.

"You can tell mother that I won't be scarred very much," Elizabeth added. "She wouldn't like to have a scarred daughter."

"Mother will think as I do, my precious, that the chief thing is to have you at all."

Elizabeth lay still for a while with her eyes closed. When she opened them she said, "It is nice to have people care."

"Everybody cares, Betsy," William exclaimed

earnestly. He had an odd, embarrassed feeling, and found it difficult to think of anything to say. Now he went near and patted her hand.

A little smile curled her lips. "Billy, I remembered rugs and blankets, but there weren't any; that is why I lost my head." Then she added, "The Gray Friar saved my life, didn't he? I want to see him sometime — when I am rested — and Louis, too."

Louis crept about the house like an unhappy ghost, avoiding every one, silent and moody. His newly regained power to walk had not been lost, as Hyacinth feared, though he moved in a weak, uncertain way; but it brought him no pleasure, it had been won at too great a cost.

Hyacinth relieved about Elizabeth, rejoicing at the prospect of her brother's complete recovery, busy and useful as she was, could not quite understand his depression, nor realize how, as he sat for long intervals gazing with melancholy eyes into space, he was going over and over that terrible experience.

He begged to see Elizabeth, yet when permission was at length given, it threw him into a pitiable state of excitement.

It was thought best to prepare her for seeing him on his feet, and she greeted him with, "Why, Louis, how tall you are!" smiling at him from her pillows. "I am so glad. I thought it must be a dream that you ran after me. Now when I get well we can take walks, can't we?" she went on, as Louis remained silent.

He sat down beside her and tried to speak, but could not find his voice.

"You mustn't mind, Louis. I'm going to get well, you know."

"Oh, Betsy, can you forgive me?" Louis leaned his head on his hand, with his face half hidden.

"Why, it was an accident. Of course I do."

"But it was miserable carelessness, and besides, I ought not to have been smoking at all. The doctor said it was bad for me in my condition, and Hyacinth begged me not to. You see, I have gone on always doing the things I liked, anyhow. But I wouldn't have hurt you, Betsy, for anything in the world, and if—" he broke off abruptly.

"I know you wouldn't, Louis, so please don't

mind. Now you can walk, you don't know how glad I am."

"Don't you see how that makes it all the worse — for me to benefit by your suffering?"

A worried, puzzled expression came into Elizabeth's eyes, and the nurse looking in feared she was being excited and sent Louis away.

The next person she saw was the Gray Friar, several days later. There was nothing exciting about him. Except for the bandaged right hand he was just the same, gray clothes and all, though perhaps there was a new tenderness in the smile with which he said —

"Well, my little Betsy, this is a rough bit of road, isn't it?"

Elizabeth's eyes sparkled. "I have been thinking about that. When I'm very uncomfortable, I try to remember about those who travel bravely, you know; and there are nice things even about being burned. People love you and are sorry. I am afraid I haven't been *very* brave," she added.

"I rather think you have," said the Grey Friar.

"I told father to tell you how much obliged I am to you for saving my life."

Though the Gray Friar smiled, something glistened in his eyes. "My little friend," he said, "I can hardly imagine a greater privilege than being allowed to come to your help the other day. I like to believe it was part of the plan that I should pass by just then."

"That our paths should cross," she added.

The Gray Friar was welcome to come as he pleased to Hyacinth Hill in these days, which was fortunate, as Elizabeth often asked for him.

"He is so comfortable," she said to Miss Unadilla; "he helps me to be patient."

Miss Una understood. There was something restful in the man's quiet strength. And Elizabeth had need of patience as the tedious convalescence began.

"You and Miss Hyacinth are friends now, aren't you?" she remarked one day when Professor Whitney sat beside her.

"Yes, there was a little misunderstanding which has been cleared away," he replied, for the matter of the letter had been explained before this.

"I knew Miss Hyacinth liked you," Elizabeth said triumphantly.

"It just goes to show, Betsy, how out of what seems hard and cruel something good is sure to come. Miss Gilderoy and I found a point of contact, to use an educational phrase, in our anxiety for you."

"And Louis found he could walk," Elizabeth added. "It makes me think of the little golden flower that grows along every path. 'Good in everything,' that is Belle's motto."

When she was able to stand it, Elizabeth was lifted to a couch and moved into the sitting room for a change. Hyacinth would not hear of her being taken back to Dr. Milward's. The air was purer up here on the hill, she insisted, and being on the ground floor Elizabeth could be carried about more easily, and would soon be able to enjoy the porch. She was so urgent that for the present no change was made. Miss Una went home every night now, leaving the nurse in charge, but through the day she or William, and sometimes Dr. Milward, too, were sure to be there. Once a week Mr. Sayre came up from Washington, and all that devotion could

suggest was done for the invalid. They had all loved her dearly before, but it took the shock of possible loss to show them just what her life meant to them.

"Billy, I believe you are quite fond of me," Elizabeth said one day.

"Yes, I am," Billy acknowledged.

"And if I had burned to death, you would have been sorry. I was thinking the other night how badly mother would have felt, and I cried myself, just a little. Wasn't that silly?"

Not long ago Billy would have thought it supremely silly, but now he said, "I couldn't get along without you, Betsy. It is awfully lonesome as it is."

Elizabeth felt that this made up for all William's teasing, past and to come.

One day the Gray Friar came in with a lot of plans under his arm, and nothing would do but Betsy must see them. So he unrolled and explained them, going on to tell of some of the special features of the school. Hyacinth, who was there, made suggestions and asked questions, and Billy offered some frank criticisms, and the Gray Friar went on talking shop at a terrible rate, as he afterward said.

Elizabeth was delighted, nothing pleased her so much as to have bright talk going on around her, even though she was too weak to take much part in it.

But Louis held aloof. He continued to brood over his carelessness, and the suffering it had brought upon Elizabeth, with morbid persistence, and worse than this was the unreasonable jealousy he felt toward Professor Whitney, who had been able to save Elizabeth when he had failed.

Strangely enough his physical condition improved slowly; each day he could take a few more steps, and his desire to escape from people kept him out of doors a large part of the time. His secret purpose was to get strong enough to go far away somewhere, beyond the reach of everybody he had ever known; and he had vague dreams of retrieving himself, of returning rich and distinguished after years of absence, but these fancies brought him little comfort—his self-love had received too deep a wound.

And where was help to come from now? Nothing Hyacinth could say, either in reproach

or encouragement, had any effect. Elizabeth saw his depression with puzzled discomfort. She did not understand.

It was a little brown book that at length spoke to him. Some one had left it on the stone bench by the sun-dial, and Louis, dropping down to rest after walking to and from the gate, picked it up and idly turned the leaves. This caught his eye:—

“Perhaps you are torturing yourself with regret because of some act of your own which has brought pain upon another. Believe me, it is useless—worse, it is paralyzing. Face like a man the truth that the past cannot be undone, then make of this bitter experience an education. With courage and faith consecrate your life to the best you know. Be something, do something—and now.”

It seemed to Louis it must have been written just for him. There was comfort in it, for it told him some one else had had a like experience. There was a sting because of the suggestion that to brood over the past as he was doing was unmanly. There was hope in the ringing appeal of the last sentence.

The sound of steps on the gravel road made him drop the little volume hastily. It was Miss Unadilla and Hyacinth, who stopped to speak to him, and Hyacinth, seeing the book in the corner of the bench, took it up and carried it away.

The message seemed to him so personal Louis could not bring himself to ask his sister for the book, even the title of which he had not noticed. Perhaps he had had from it what belonged to him. The words he read seemed burned into his memory.

He fought his battle out that day, and from a boy he became a man, earnest and determined. Probably nobody understood the change, though it was manifest to all. He threw off his depression, was no longer irritable; he took out his drawing materials once more, and though graver than he used to be, he no longer preferred solitude. Perhaps it was the easier for him that the Gray Friar was called away about this time, and so was not the frequent visitor he had been of late.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH

PATHS THAT CROSS

“**T**HE last of September; next week work begins.” Louis leaned on the stile and watched Elizabeth, who sat there arranging a bunch of golden-rod and white asters.

She looked older and more delicate than a year ago, but there was a soft color in her face, and her blue eyes were as merry as ever. Louis was greatly changed. He was brown as a nut from three months camping in the woods, and though still slender for his height, his chest had broadened, and he had taken on a look of vigor that made it seem impossible he had ever been the helpless invalid of last winter.

“I am glad you aren’t going to give up your drawing, Louis,” Elizabeth said. “The Gray Friar thinks you have a great deal of talent.”

“I know I have some, and it is what I long to do, so I shall believe and venture.”

"You are going out into the unknown, aren't you?" Elizabeth lifted her eyes and smiled at him. "I'll get the Gray Friar to give you one of his dodgers."

"I have one; I asked for it. We are good friends now, Betsy. I like him tremendously. It was he who gave me the courage to go on with my work. But before that—I never told you about it, it was while you were ill and I was so unhappy—I came across a book one day in which there was something that exactly fitted me. I really think," Louis spoke earnestly, "it was meant to come in my way. I had read just a paragraph when I was interrupted, and I didn't even know the title or the author. Hyacinth carried it off, and I didn't like to ask for it, so I did not discover till the other day that it was Professor Whitney's book."

"The Gray Friar knows how to help people. I knew you would like him when you once were acquainted," Elizabeth remarked, with a nod of satisfaction.

"It made me feel," Louis went on, "that when you have done something wrong—something for which another person suffers, you owe it to that

person to be of some account, to make something of yourself, so that the suffering may not be all in vain. The person may not care, but that is your part — my part I ought to say."

Elizabeth looked thoughtful. "If you mean me, Louis, I do care a great deal, and I know you are going to succeed. I wonder what would have happened if we hadn't all come to Friendship last year?"

"Well, Betsy, I am awfully glad our paths crossed, as you so often say. I don't like to imagine what would have happened if they had not. I don't suppose I can ever make up to you for all I have made you suffer, but —"

"Now, Louis, please — you promised you wouldn't say such things."

"I won't then, only I do wish that sometime I might do something big for you, for I owe a lot to you. I shall not see you for a long while, probably. After this winter at the Art Institute I shall go to Paris; I think I can manage it, but I shall have to work tremendously. You must promise not to forget me, and perhaps some day our paths will cross again."

"I shall not forget you, Louis," Elizabeth said

seriously, tying a piece of tough grass about her flowers. "Did I tell you we are all to be together in Washington this winter? Billy is there now. Mother and Juliet will come next month. I had my choice of staying with Aunt Myrah at Mountain Top, or coming here for two weeks, and I wanted to see everybody once more, so I came here."

"It does seem like a sort of general breaking-up, doesn't it?" said Louis. "Let's go for a good-bye row on the river. Jack Parton lends me his boat while I am here. He left to-day."

So presently they were floating down the winding river, between banks fringed with willows and wild oats. The sunshine sparkled in Elizabeth's brown hair, and the wind loosened and curled it about her face, after a fashion of its own. She leaned forward and trailed her fingers in the clear water. "It is such a beautiful world," she said joyously.

A short time after Elizabeth and Louis had passed on their way to the river, Miss Gilderoy stepped out of the shadow of the covered bridge into the sunny road. She had been to call at Dr. Milward's, where there was no one at home.

She walked slowly, with a half smile on her lips, thinking of the changes that had come about in one brief year; for the sunshine, the soft air, the purple and gold of the meadows, reminded her of another September day, when she had travelled this same road with a weight of anxiety on her heart, not knowing what was before her.

A voice at her elbow said, "Good afternoon," and there was the Gray Friar.

"As usual, you appear as if you had dropped from the skies," she said, giving him her hand.

"I was conversing with Tommy Bent, who is fishing on the bank, when I saw you. You were looking very thoughtful; I almost feared to interrupt."

"Like the walrus, I was thinking of many things," Hyacinth replied, smiling.

"Of shoes and ships and sealing-wax,
Of cabbages and kings,"

he finished the quotation.

"Tell me about the school, how is it doing?" Hyacinth asked.

"It has opened well. Our present quarters are rather restricted, but I hope by the first of the year the new building will be ready."

They walked on as far as the stile, talking of the school and matters connected with it. As they paused there, Hyacinth said, "Won't you come up to the house with me and have a cup of tea? Or perhaps you will have an apple?" she added gayly. "It may be your last chance to enjoy my hospitality for a while. I think it will be better for Louis to be in the city this winter, so I shall probably rent Hyacinth Hill. I have had an offer."

The Gray Friar looked at her gravely. "Would you consider another?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," Hyacinth answered, laughing, "I shall make the best bargain I can." Then something in her companion's eyes caused her to stoop suddenly to pick up a branch of golden-rod dropped by Betsy.

There was a sound of wheels coming down hill. "There is Mrs. Parton," she exclaimed. "What a coincidence! Come," she added, hastily mounting the stile—that is, if you care for tea," looking over her shoulder with a world of mischief, and something more, in her eyes.

To judge by the promptness with which he

followed, the Gray Friar was extremely fond of tea. They were more than halfway across the meadow before the driver of the bay horse came within sight of them.

In the soft, half light of the wood path they slackened their pace. "Hyacinth, you understand, don't you?" The Gray Friar bent his head to see her face. "I haven't much to offer—I am not rich; but whatever I have or am is yours for the taking."

Hyacinth lifted her eyes; they were full of a sweet earnestness. "I don't care for riches, but I should like to help you, Martin."

If the longest way round is sometimes the shortest way home, it must follow that at others the shortest way is the longest. Hyacinth and the Gray Friar might have followed the road to the front gate of Hyacinth Hill twice over in the time it took them to reach it by the wood path.

"There is just one objection I have to this arrangement," she was saying with mischievous gravity, as they lingered on the edge of the lawn,— "it is so obviously fitting and suitable."

"I don't mind that at all," the Gray Friar

replied cheerfully, "especially when I think of the years spent in hoping against hope."

"And I didn't know," Hyacinth said softly. "Never mind, it shall all be made up to you," she added.

Miss Unadilla and Dr. Milward were at this moment crossing the lawn. Hyacinth advanced to meet them with a little more color in her face than usual.

"You must come back and have some tea," she said.

But Miss Una declined. "No, my dear, thank you; it is growing late. We have been enjoying your porch for half an hour. I rather expected to find Elizabeth here."

"Louis carried her off for a row; I met them," said the Gray Friar.

"And I went to call on you," Hyacinth added.

"Well, Unadilla," said her cousin as they walked home, "I suppose you are satisfied?"

"Yes, it is just as it should be." Miss Una sighed happily.

"Hyacinth will find the opportunity for usefulness she thought she had missed," Dr. Milward went on. "Do you mind growing old, Una,

when you see happiness like this? Does it make you think regretfully of what has been denied you, or what you may have lost?"

"Perhaps a little, but I don't often think about it. There is always something left," and she smiled as she added, "If only the belief that we'll find our own in the end."

"'For He hath prepared for them a city,'" Dr. Milward repeated, half to himself.

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